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The Political Career of Thomas Wriothesley, First Earl of Southampton, 1505-1550

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March 1999



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Abstract.

The introduction to the thesis gives an overview of the life and career of Thomas Wriothesley and considers the primary and secondary sources which provide the material upon which the thesis is based. It is followed by a detailed consideration of Wriothesley's sixteen years in the service of Wolsey and Cromwell, recording his growing competence and authority in the administrative machinery of mid-Tudor government and in his influence in the day to day management of state affairs as Cromwell's secretary.

The third section concentrates on Wriothesley's four years as the king's secretary, referring to his work in the financial field in obtaining funds to finance the king's wars. It examines his growing status in the court and privy council, and reviews his work as an ambassador for Henry after 1530. Henry's confidence in him ensured his occasional employment as a special, rather than resident ambassador to the imperial court, and his work in this specialist field is investigated.

Wriothesley held the office of lord chancellor for only three years and in that period made a limited impact in a judicial sense, in part due to his restricted professional expertise. His principal function over those years, of finding means to financing the high costs of Henry's military campaigns, and putting in order the chaotic condition of the monetary system, is closely examined. Wriothesley's growing involvement as lord chancellor in the developing factional struggles that encompassed the privy chamber and the council mostly, but not only, in religious matters is also assessed. His role in other aspects of the office of lord chancellor, in parliament, in framing proclamations and as the senior member of the government dealing with foreign ambassadors, is considered in detail.

Perhaps the most important feature of the last years of Wriothesley's career was his deep involvement in the political and religious turmoils of the latter years of Henry's reign and the first two years of Edward's. In the period between 1544 and 1550, perhaps for the only occasions in his life, serious misjudgement of events put him in real peril of his life and property, lost him the office of lord chancellor and effectively sidelined him for most of the last two years of his life. In his efforts to ruin Queen Catherine Parr, his harassment of reformers, and in his mistaken view during the last three months of the Protectorate that Warwick was really a Henrician catholic in disguise, Thomas Wriothesley showed a surprising degree of self-deception. His actions suggest that his political instinct failed him at the most crucial points in his career.

Substantial rewards, which usually followed a period of valuable royal service or successful military achievement, were in Wriothesley's case gathered in a relatively short lifetime of determined endeavour. We examine in Appendix 1, the many financial benefits and landed property he secured and retained successfully, the offices he gathered and consider the extent of his authority and influence in his home county of Hampshire. In Appendices 2 and 3 we look briefly at Titchfield Place, Wriothesley's home in Hampshire and the detailed provisions of his Will.

The thesis concludes with an assessment of the life, administrative and political career of Thomas Wriothesley, in the context of the mid-Tudor period.

Acknowledgements

The debts which I have incurred in the writing of this thesis are, with a few specific exceptions, too numerous to mention individually but encompass the whole range of those historians who have devoted their lives to the study of the mid-Tudor period. I hope that their contributions to the literature upon which I have drawn freely, are adequately acknowledged in the footnotes to this thesis.

No one, least of all a retired lawyer, would contemplate entering upon the demanding task of writing a thesis without much encouragement and support. I am more than fortunate in what has been so generously offered. Peter Marshall with undiminished patience, sometimes in the face of ignorance and certainly innocence, has guided me throughout along the difficult path of research in the extensive archive of Tudor historiography. I cannot express adequately enough my gratitude to him for all the time and encouragement he has freely given at every stage of the long and sometimes tortuous road. The academic staff of the History department at Warwick University, especially Professor Bernard Capp, and Richard Parker of the University Library have always provided a helping hand when the going was tough. My grateful thanks are also due to Pauline Wilson of Computer Services without whose help I would never have mastered enough of the basic skills of word processing to be able to write the thesis.

Finally I record with gratitude my thanks to my wife Hazel for her forbearance and total support during the many months of its preparation. She has patiently endured the long hours I have spent poring over books at home and in libraries and record offices always willing and anxious to assist with suggestions and practical help. Without it this thesis would never have advanced beyond the stage of wishful thinking.

No part of this thesis has been used before or been previously published in any form.

Abbreviations.

APC	<i>Acts of the Privy Council</i> , ed. J. R. Dasent (32 vols, London, 1890-1907)
AJ	<i>Archaeological Journal</i>
BIHR	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
BL	British Library
CSP, Edward	<i>Calendar of State Papers Domestic of Edward VI</i> , ed. C. S. Knighton, (London, 1992)
CSP, Scotland	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Scotland</i>
CSP, Ireland	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, 1509-1773</i> , ed. H. C. Hamilton, (London, 1860).
CSP, Spanish	<i>Calendar of State Papers Spanish, 1485-1603</i> , eds. G. A. Bergenroth, P. De Guyangos, Royall Tyler, M. A. S. Hume, (London 1862-1899).
CSP, Venice	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Venice</i> , vol 5 (1534-1554), ed. Rawdon Brown (London, 1873).
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. L. Stephen and S. Lee (63 vols, London, 1885-1900)
Econ HR	<i>Economic History Review</i>
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i> .
Foxe, Acts and Monuments	J. Foxe, <i>Acts and Monuments</i> , ed. S. R. Cantley and ed. G. Townsend, 8 vols. (1837-41)
HJ	<i>Historical Journal</i>
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission.
HLB	<i>Harvard Library Bulletin</i>
HLQ	<i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i>
HRO	Hampshire Record Office.
HT	<i>History Today</i>
JBS	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
LQR	<i>Law Quarterly Review</i>
LP	J. S. Brewer <i>et al.</i> (eds.), <i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509-1547</i> , 21 vols, and Addenda (1862-1932).
Lisle Letters	<i>The Lisle Letters</i> , ed. M. St. Clare Byrne, 6 vols. (London and Chicago, 1981)
o.s.	Old Series
n.s.	New Series
P&P	<i>Past and Present</i>
PRO	Public Record Office
St.P Henry VIII	<i>State Papers, King Henry VIII</i> , (11 vols, London, 1830-52)
SCJ	<i>Sixteenth Century Journal</i>
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
VCH	<i>The Victoria History of the Counties of England</i> , Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, 3 vols. (1900-1912).
C. Wriothesley	Wriothesley, <i>A Chronicle of England during the reigns of the Tudors</i> ed. W. D. Hamilton, 2 vols. Camden n.s. 11, 20, (London,

1875-8)

Dates are in the Old Style but the year is taken to begin on 1 January, not on 25 March

Illustrations

1. *Frontispiece.* Thomas Wriothesley, First Earl of Southampton: Portrait circa 1544/5 by an unknown artist currently on display at Palace House, Beaulieu. With the kind permission of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu a reproduction is included in this thesis. Lord Montagu states that 'the original painting of Thomas Wriothesley, after Holbein, is believed to have been destroyed in the fire at Montagu House, Bloomsbury in 1686'.

2. *Between pages 158 and 159.* An engraving of 'Thomas Lord Wriothesly, afterwards Earl of Southampton' held in the Hampshire Record Office and here reproduced by permission of the County Archivist Mrs. Margaret Cooke.

3. *Between pages 294 and 295.* An original photograph taken by the author of the remains of Titchfield Place in mid 1997.

The Political Career of Thomas Wriothesley, First Earl of Southampton, 1505-1550

1. Introduction

To date no 'Life' of Thomas Wriothesley, first earl of Southampton has been written.¹ This thesis will attempt to remedy that deficiency with a review of his career while acknowledging the warning of Helen Miller that even for the greatest Tudor noblemen there is rarely enough known to sustain a full biography.² There are few major Tudor figures whose careers have not been examined in detail yet Thomas Wriothesley is one of them.³ We will seek to paint a picture of his political career from his earliest employment in the mid 1520s to the disaster of 1549. His formative years will be examined so far as evidence is available, his service under Wolsey and Cromwell, his responsibility for the country's finances (especially during his years as Lord Chancellor), and his efforts to reorganise the Chancery and revenue courts. The effectiveness of his work as secretary of state and ambassador, his importance and

¹ Strictly speaking Thomas Wriothesley was not the first earl of Southampton. That distinction belongs to Sir William Fitzwilliam who was treasurer of the royal household and elevated to the peerage in 1537. He was Lord Admiral and Lord Privy Seal between 1540 and 1542. With Norfolk he arrested Cromwell, and died without issue of Mabel, daughter of Henry Lord Clifford in October 1542, or 1543 according to Henry Machin. The title died with him, to be revived for Wriothesley. There is some difference of view as to whether Fitzwilliam or Wriothesley should be described as first earl. D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer, A Life* (New Haven and London, 1996), prefers the former, p. 679. See also the account of Wriothesley in *DNB*, xxi, p. 1063 by A. F. Pollard.

² H. Miller, *Henry VIII and the English Nobility* (Oxford, 1986), p. 3.

³ A. J. Slavin (ed.) *Tudor Men and Institutions: Studies in English Law and Government* (Baton Rouge, 1972), p. 51, n. 7, writes, 'there is no good study of Wriothesley, pending the completion of my book, tentatively titled "Politics and Power"'. The writer understands on reliable, though third-hand evidence, that Slavin completed the text of such a book in draft, but that it was lost when the car in which it was being carried was stolen. The car and its contents were never recovered.

standing as Lord Chancellor from 1544-1547, his thwarted career under Edward, and his work within and without the privy council in the religious and political fields will be fully explored, as will the factors which influenced his behaviour in the last ten years of his life. In the conclusion we make an assessment of his character, personality and achievements during some of the most turbulent years of the mid-Tudor period.

There is little doubt that Wriothesley died a disappointed man in July 1550, wearied with labour, discarded by his former colleagues and over the last nine months of his life oppressed by the illness which had been an intermittent burden to him for many years. Wriothesley rose to a position of wealth and eminence during the reign of Henry VIII but misjudged the strength of the reformist pressure within the privy chamber and in the privy council during the last months preceding the king's death. As a consequence of his hostility to the plans of Edward Seymour, John Dudley, and William Paget he lost his office of Lord Chancellor and with it his seat on the privy council. Having been restored to the council in late 1548 or early 1549 Wriothesley made an ill-judged challenge, in company with Arundel, for supremacy in the privy council in October 1549 in what is generally believed to have been an attempted coup encouraged by Dudley, earl of Warwick, as part of his plan to remove the Protector. Wriothesley's hope, like other religious conservatives, was for the restoration of the Henrician church in the face of the changes which had occurred since January 1547. His estimate of Dudley's intentions proved to be wrong and far from leading the country back towards its old religious ways, Warwick moved the reforming movement onwards, rejected Wriothesley and brought his public career to an end.

Wriothesley died possessed of great wealth accumulated at a time of unprecedented opportunities for those close to the throne or in a position to enrich

themselves from the monastic dissolution. He had made himself one of the two largest landowners in Hampshire, with a gross annual income of between £2000 and £3000.⁴ His estates were assembled from the perquisites of the office of Lord Chancellor, gifts from the crown, and from suitors and subordinates all of which enabled him to make substantial land purchases.⁵ The enthusiasm with which he, in common with most, if not all of the peerage, and as many of the gentry as could engage in the activity, enriched himself during the years immediately after the dissolution will form a backcloth to his political role. The family man prepared a will which says much about his care and concern not only for his immediate relatives but for others to whom he felt he had some obligation.⁶

This thesis makes substantial use of the state papers for the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI. The records of the Privy Council and the Calendars of State Papers Spanish will also feature prominently in this thesis. The Hampshire Record Office at Winchester houses two collections of papers concerning the Wriothesley family, the larger consisting mainly of documents relating to his property holdings and a few letters which touch upon his political career.⁷ The smaller collection of papers deals principally with the properties of the earldom of Southampton. There is also a collection of papers catalogued as “Wriothesley Papers” (SP 7) at the Public Record Office which comprises a bundle of letters addressed to Wriothesley between 1536 and 1538 while he was clerk of the signet and secretary to Thomas Cromwell.⁸ A small

⁴ L. Stone, ‘The Wriothesleys, Earls of Southampton’, in *Family and Fortune: Studies in Aristocratic Finance in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 209-17.

⁵ Ibid, pp. 210-11. See also Appendix 1 below.

⁶ J. P. Collier (ed.), *Trevelyan Papers*, Camden Society, o.s, 67, (1857), pp. 206-16. See Appendix 2, pp. 311-14.

⁷ The Collection is catalogued under ‘Welbeck Abbey: Calendar of Wriothesley Deeds’ in twelve volumes, reference 5M53 (Wriothesley Deeds), at HRO in Winchester.

⁸ PRO. SP7, Wriothesley Papers.

proportion are of a personal nature and some deal with his property and land interests, but many are begging letters from both the influential and the lowly, seeking his intervention to secure favours, land or offices. The thesis also makes use of the contemporary published sources of Charles Wriothesley,⁹ Thomas's cousin, John Foxe,¹⁰ Richard Grafton,¹¹ Raphael Holinshed.¹²

Thomas Wriothesley's judicial career is discussed in Lord John Campbell's *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*¹³ and Foss's *Judges of England*, though neither can be treated as wholly reliable.¹⁴ The most telling contemporary evidence for Wriothesley's competence as a judge is to be traced through the Entry Books of Decrees and Orders, held at the Public Record Office. Those documents are drawn on in the appropriate place below, and they show that Wriothesley in his Chancery court was as effective in a judicial capacity as he was an administrator.¹⁵

The treatment of Wriothesley in modern accounts has been patchy. A brief history of his life and work is contained in an article by A. L. Rowse published in the *Huntington Library Quarterly* in 1956, though it has little to say about Wriothesley's role as Henry's secretary and Lord Chancellor.¹⁶ A chapter in *Tudor Men and Institutions* by A. J. Slavin deals specifically with his efforts to re-organise the Court of Augmentations and another article by the same author is concerned with the last two years of his life and his fall from power and influence.¹⁷ It seeks to argue that the

⁹ Cited as Wriothesley.

¹⁰ Cited as Foxe, (London, 1563).

¹¹ R. Grafton, *A Chronicle at large...* (London, 1568), ed. H. Ellis (London, 1809).

¹² R. Holinshed, *Chronicle* 5 vols. (London, 1577), ed. H. Ellis, (London, 1809).

¹³ John, Lord Campbell, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors* vol. 1 (London, 1846).

¹⁴ E. Foss, *Biographia Juridica: A Biographical Dictionary of the Judges of England, 1066-1860* (London, 1870).

¹⁵ See p. 105 below.

¹⁶ A. L. Rowse, 'Thomas Wriothesley, First Earl of Southampton', *HLQ*, vol. 28, 2 (1965) pp. 105-29.

¹⁷ Slavin, *Tudor Men and Institutions*, pp. 49-69. A. J. Slavin, 'The Fall of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley; A Study in the Politics of Conspiracy', *Albion*, 7 (1975), pp. 265-85.

conventional view of Wriothesley as a devious politician, harasser of heretics, and betrayer of his friends, is unsupported by credible evidence. Slavin suggests that Wriothesley was a maligned politician who had the misfortune to fall foul of Edward Seymour and lost the office of chancellor, not on any justifiable grounds but because Seymour needed to remove a tiresome obstacle to his plans for personal control of the council. More controversially, Slavin also seeks to show that Wriothesley was not as committed to Catholicism as most historians have assumed. As I will argue below the arguments and the evidence he adduces are not convincing.¹⁸ Finally there is a dissertation by Christopher Adams, which attempts to deal with most aspects of Wriothesley's career and in which the author assesses his religious concerns and political judgements.¹⁹ He reflects in general terms the views of Rowse, but deficiencies limit its value and some significant material which covers Wriothesley's role in the financial field is either not mentioned or is given very limited coverage. It is a partial 'Life' only.

As Thomas Wriothesley played a part in many of the momentous events between 1530 and 1550, he is referred to in virtually all the secondary works covering the mid-Tudor period, and more particularly in the standard accounts of Elton,²⁰ Scarisbrick,²¹ Hoak,²² Gammon,²³ Bush,²⁴ Jordan,²⁵ and Merriman,²⁶ though not so

¹⁸ See below pp. 276-82.

¹⁹ C. Adams, 'Tudor Minister; Sir Thomas Wriothesley', MA dissertation, Manchester University, 1970.

²⁰ G. R. Elton, *Policy and Police, The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge, 1972); *Reform and Reformation, England, 1509-1558* (London, 1977); *The Tudor Constitution* (Cambridge, 1982); *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government* 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1974-92); *Tudor Revolution in Government: Administrative changes in the Reign of Henry VIII* (London, 1953)

²¹ J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London, 1968).

²² D. E. Hoak, *The Kings Council in the Reign of Edward VI* (Cambridge, 1976).

²³ S. R. Gammon, *Statesman and Schemer, William, First Lord Paget-Tudor Minister* (Newton Abbot, 1973).

²⁴ M. L. Bush, *The Government Policy of Protector Somerset* (McGill, Montreal, 1975).

frequently, as might be expected. Indeed for many historians he seems to have been a very shadowy presence before the death of Cromwell and his career before 1540 usually rates only a brief mention. Given the extensive evidence in the state papers of Wriothesley's position in the governmental machine from the early 1530s onwards it is surprising that he figures much less prominently in Merriman's work on Cromwell than would be expected. Geoffrey Elton describes Wriothesley as 'manifestly the most successful civil servant of his day', and yet he and for the most part other historians, do not reflect that opinion in their assessment of him and his contribution to the governmental process.²⁷ In Elton's *Reform and Renewal*, for example, Wriothesley has barely a mention,²⁸ though he fares rather better in *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government, Reform and Reformation and Policy and Police*.²⁹ There is little acknowledgement of his great achievements for Henry in the financial field, and the contribution he made to the reforming of the Chancery court, limited though that was. Only A. J. Slavin,³⁰ W. C. Richardson³¹ and Christopher Adams,³² have attempted, and then only to a limited degree, to place him and his work squarely in the context of Henry's political ambitions and his religious schemes. Even in Scarisbrick's monumental work Wriothesley appears only as an elusive figure, flitting on and off the stage. He fares rather better at the hands of Glyn Redworth but even so deserves more,³³ and recent works on Cranmer, the Reformation in London and John Dudley,

²⁵ W. K. Jordan, *Edward VI: The Young King, The Protectorship of the Duke of Somerset* (London, 1968), and *Edward VI: The Threshold of Power, The Dominance of the Duke of Northumberland* (London, 1970).

²⁶ R. B. Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell* 2 vols. (Oxford, 1902).

²⁷ Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government*, p. 312.

²⁸ G. R. Elton, *Reform and Renewal: Thomas Cromwell and the Common Weal* (Cambridge, 1973).

²⁹ Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government; Reform and Reformation; Policy and Police*.

³⁰ A. J. Slavin, *Politics and Profit, A Study of Sir Ralph Sadler, 1507-1547* (Cambridge, 1966).

³¹ W. C. Richardson, *Tudor Chamber Administration, 1485-1547* (Baton Rouge, 1952).

³² Adams, 'Tudor Minister, Sir Thomas Wriothesley'.

³³ G. Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic: The Life of Stephen Gardiner* (Oxford, 1990).

duke of Northumberland do not give him as much consideration as his historical importance justifies.³⁴ In general terms few historians have recognised that Thomas Wriothesley was a significant figure on the Henrician stage.

Posterity has been severe with Wriothesley, and overall little complimentary has been said about him. Pollard wrote that

it is difficult to trace in Southampton's career any motive beyond that of self-aggrandisement. Trained in the Machiavellian school of Cromwell, he was without the definite aims and resolute will that to some extent redeemed his master's lack of principle. He won and retained Henry VIII's favour by his readiness in lending his abilities to the king's most nefarious designs, thereby inspiring an almost universal distrust.³⁵

Foss describes him in equally unflattering terms;

few persons who have held a prominent position in the state have had so little said to their credit as Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. He seems to have been looked upon as haughty towards his inferiors, and slavishly subservient to those who were above him. When advanced to high office, his conceited opinion of his own superiority made him treat with disdain those who differed from him, and this disposition operated with peculiar force against those who advocated the reformed doctrines.³⁶

Neither Pollard nor Foss provide any evidence for these indictments and in default of any such material their opinions should be treated with caution. Jordan concludes that he was 'an inveterate intriguer', and 'an opinionated and thorny man, not an easy or trustworthy colleague'. Furthermore he 'was not only known to be a conservative in his religious views, but also an ambitious, an able, and a not wholly reliable man'³⁷ On the other hand Campbell, while deploring the extremes to which he was carried by his mistaken religious zeal, writes that

we must honour the sincerity and constancy by which he was distinguished from the great body of the courtiers of Henry VIII, and the leaders of faction in

³⁴ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*; S. Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford 1989); D. M. Loades, *John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, 1504-53* (Oxford, 1996).

³⁵ *DNB*, vol. xxi.

³⁶ Foss, *Judges of England*, p. 767.

³⁷ Jordan, *The Young King*, pp. 69-70.

the reign of Edward VI, who were at all times disposed to accommodate their religious faith to their personal interest.³⁸

Whether that is more complimentary than the available evidence suggests will be considered in the course of this work. While there were occasions when Thomas Wriothesley, in common with most of those around Henry, was prepared to compromise his convictions for the needs of the moment, the suggestion that Wriothesley was better or worse than the rest remains to be considered.

With the exception of Jordan, none of the other authors cited above provide much evidence for their verdicts, and all must be treated with caution pending a full consideration of Wriothesley's actions and of the opinions of his contemporaries. The general impression of inconstancy, unreliability and deviousness, however, seems to have struck contemporaries as forcefully as modern historians. Richard Scudamore's view of him expressed in a letter to Sir Philip Hoby written only hours after his death records that 'yesternyght God hath called to his mercye the Earle of Southampton, for the which I geave to God most high thanks'.³⁹ There is very little there of regret or sorrow. The retrospective verdict of Richard Moryson in a letter to the marquis of Northampton in November 1551 may also reflect contemporary feeling about Thomas Wriothesley. However, he was then dead and the writer would have as much an eye to the impression of his words upon his reader, as upon the accuracy of his comments.

I am sure you will bear me witness, (he said), I was afraid of a tempest all the while that Wriothesley was able to raise any. I knew he was an earnest follower of whatsoever he took in hand, and did very seldom miss where either wit or travail were able to bring his purpose to pass. Most true it is, I never was able to persuade myself that Wriothesley could be great, but the king's majesty must be in the greatest danger.⁴⁰

³⁸ Campbell, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, pp. 663-4. It is worth noting that in a Foreword to Foss's work, the comment is made that '*Judges of England* had taken its place (what Lord Campbell's *Lives* would never become), as one of historical authority'. Foss, *Judges of England*, p. xiv.

³⁹ S. Brigden, (ed.), 'The Letters of Richard Scudamore to Sir Philip Hoby, Sept 1549 to March 1555', *Camden Miscellany*, xxx, Fourth Series, 39 (London, 1990), p. 143.

⁴⁰ *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign of Edward VI*, ed. W. B. Turnbull, (London, 1861), p. 196.

George Blagge, a gentleman of the privy chamber, was yet more scathing: 'By false deceit, by craft and subtle ways' cruelty had 'crept full high, borne up by sundry stays'. He had some unpleasant personal experience of Wriothesley and nearly lost his life at his hands, and his obituary ('The Dogge is dead, the Sowle is downe to hell'), may well have been coloured by that. Gardiner was none too complimentary either, seeing Wriothesley as a follower, clever and ingratiating, but a man who tried to be everything to every man, and in consequence was trusted by few, though industrious.⁴¹ Susan Brigden notes that his reformist enemies saw him as a 'picture of pride, of papistry the plat'.⁴² Both Brigden and Elton have suggested that there is also credible evidence that an anonymous poem implies that Wriothesley betrayed Cromwell; the internal evidence points to Wriothesley in the sense that it is very difficult to identify another to whom it might apply more aptly, but there can be no absolute certainty.⁴³ Paget's comment on Wriothesley that he was 'stout and arrogant' should not necessarily be taken at face value; the comments followed the decision to remove from his custody the Great Seal and given the circumstances in which that happened, it is highly unlikely, being aligned with Seymour and Dudley, that William Paget would have said any less, true though the comment may have been.⁴⁴ Most direct contemporary comment upon the character of Wriothesley is, it would appear, distinctly unfavourable. It is worth remembering however that Wriothesley was ultimately on

⁴¹ J. A. Muller, (ed.), *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner* (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 325-6.

⁴² Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 360.

⁴³ S. Brigden, "'The Shadow that you know': Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Francis Bryan at Court and in Embassy", *HJ*, 39, 1 (1996), p. 22; Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government*, i, p. 191.

⁴⁴ *CSP, Spanish*, ix, pp. 100-1. Gammon, *Statesman and Schemer*, p. 134.

the losing side of the mid-Tudor factional conflicts, and that a number of these assessments come from the victors, his political enemies.

It is an aim of this thesis to look beyond received judgements about Wriothesley, to examine closely the course of his political career in order to arrive at a balanced and objective conclusion. It will be argued that while Wriothesley's impact upon the religious and political history of England between 1540 and 1550 was always significant, he made two particularly crucial appearances on the political stage, in 1547 and 1549, and strenuous, though unsuccessful, attempts in 1546-7 to ensure an important conservative presence in the council following the death of Henry. Towards the end of his own life he found himself in open hostility with the reformers.

In the years between 1544 and 1549 Wriothesley moved among a group of important figures who dominated the political and religious scene as he could not. Because he was never in a position completely to control events or influence them to the extent that Seymour, Dudley and Paget did at the end of Henry's reign (though with all of them he enjoyed a close personal relationship), Wriothesley has generally been relegated by historians to the role of a small part player. To get to the heart of those matters which made Wriothesley's religious and political actions somewhat obscure in 1549 is not always easy. His efforts to negotiate a reversion to Henrician Catholicism with Arundel and Dudley remain something of an enigma, convoluted, contradictory and unsuccessful, although at one stage it seemed likely to be crowned with success. In the nature of things the discussions and agreements between the central players in that drama were not recorded for posterity and the opinions of those outside the action tell us more. It is surprising therefore that the most recent work on John Dudley does not make any real attempt to rationalise the Warwick/Wriothesley

coup of October 1549 and the latter's important role in it.⁴⁵ An important part of this thesis will attempt to make good that deficiency.

While this thesis does not pretend to be a full biography, and focuses on Wriothesley's political career, some consideration of his early life is appropriate. Thomas Wriothesley was born into a family which operated on the fringes of the court. He was the first son and heir of William Wriothesley, (otherwise known as William Writhe), York Herald of Arms⁴⁶, and Agnes⁴⁷, who was daughter and heir of James (or perhaps Robert) Drayton of London, and was born in Garter Court, adjoining the Barbican, in the Cripplegate Ward, London on 21 December 1505.⁴⁸ His grandfather, father and uncle all held office as king's heralds under Edward IV, Henry VII and Henry VIII. Young Thomas Wriothesley was the grandson of John Wrythe, Garter King of Arms who died at a great age in April 1504, and a nephew to Thomas Wrythe who was also Garter King and died in November 1534 leaving a son Charles, the famous chronicler.

Wriothesley was educated under William Lily⁴⁹ who was high master of the humanist school of St. Paul's founded by Dean John Colet in London in 1509. At that school Wriothesley was a contemporary of William Paget with whom his political career was closely linked throughout their lives. Others of his generation at the same school with whom he had a close personal as well as a more formal relationship, were Anthony Denny, later a favoured confidant of Henry VIII, and John Leland, the

⁴⁵ Loades, *John Dudley*, pp. 130-2, 138-43.

⁴⁶ Campbell incorrectly states that William Wriothesley was Norroy King of Arms, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, vol. 1, p. 641.

⁴⁷ Agnes was still alive in 1538. *LP*, xiii, (1), 151.

⁴⁸ J. Stow, *Survey of London*, ed, W. J. Thoms (London, 1842), p. 113. A. L. Rowse says that the Wriothesleys were a Wiltshire family with which there is general agreement. 'Thomas Wriothesley, First Earl of Southampton', p. 105.

⁴⁹ *DNB*, vol. xi, William Lily had a house to go with the appointment. See also F. Seebohm, *The Oxford Martyrs* (London, 1867) and P. Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More* (London, 1998).

antiquarian whose reputation was made by his published writings including his Itineraries.⁵⁰ Others such as Thomas Thirlby⁵¹ later to be the first and last bishop of Westminster, and the martyr Thomas Bilney were also students at St. Paul's. From there Wriothesley and Paget went to Trinity Hall, Cambridge with a number of others including Lord William Howard a younger brother of Thomas Howard, later third duke of Norfolk.⁵²

The master at Trinity Hall, Stephen Gardiner, was some ten years older than Wriothesley and became a protégé of Wolsey before he was made bishop of Winchester in his thirties. Wriothesley joined the household of Gardiner after completing his studies at Trinity Hall, probably without having taken any degree. It is suggested, though without any supporting evidence, that he enjoyed support from Thomas Boleyn.⁵³ As Gardiner himself later recalled, he, Paget and Wriothesley while at Cambridge took part in the performance of *Miles Gloriosus*, a play by Plautus.⁵⁴ The occasion and Gardiner's acting was sufficiently memorable to be recalled by Leland.⁵⁵ Gardiner was later to compare the drama with their own individual situations in 1545 when all three were in the service of the crown and struggling to meet the insatiable demands of the state.⁵⁶ They then lived in a world where reason did not

⁵⁰ J. Leland, *Itinerary in England and Wales*, ed. L. T. Smith, (Southern Illinois U. P, 1964); J. Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, 3 vols. (London, 1721), vol. 1, pp. 594-5. Leland had a commission from Henry 'to search all the libraries of the monasteries and colleges... [that] the writings and books of learned men might be preserved'. His contribution to the saving of monastic libraries threatened by the dissolution was enormous, 'herculean'. Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, p. 242.

⁵¹ *DNB*, vol. xix. There is a suggestion that Thirlby was awarded doctorates in both canon and civil law and received an allowance from Anne Boleyn as a favourer of the gospel. See also T. F. Shirley, *Thomas Thirlby: Tudor Bishop* (London, 1964), p. 4.

⁵² *DNB*, vol. x.

⁵³ E. W. Ives, *Anne Boleyn* (Oxford, 1986), p. 164. Ives relies upon S. T. Bindoff, (ed.), *The House of Commons, 1509-1558* (London, 1982), vol. iii, p. 664, but he provides no identified authority.

⁵⁴ *Miles Gloriosus*, translated into English as 'The Braggart Warrior', may be found in P. Nixon, (ed.) *Plautus*, vol. iii (London, 1924), pp. 119-285. See page 154 below.

⁵⁵ J. Leland, *Encomia*, p. 100-1; Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 10.

⁵⁶ PRO, SP, 1/210, fo. 122, (LP, xx, (2), 788); Muller, *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, no. 86, p. 186.

prevail, where commitments were ignored and the least excuse used to avoid compliance; he found the contrast between their situations as members of their college and their current political positions to be ironic. Certainly the close and, for many years, friendly terms on which all three existed, made for ease of communication between them but the widening of a rift in later years between Paget and Gardiner (and for a time between Wriothesley and Gardiner) arose out of differing political and religious views and developed, in Paget's case, into a strong degree of personal antipathy which was only resolved shortly before Gardiner's death.

We will seek to follow and make sense of the path which leads from the carefree student-actor of the early 1520s to the embattled politician of the late 1540s. How did Thomas Wriothesley reach a position of eminence in the state? What were his achievements in court, in the council, in Parliament? How successfully did he fulfil the offices of king's secretary, Lord Chancellor and ambassador? What wealth and property did he manage to acquire, and by what process? What can we conclude about his family life and own pre-occupations? It has been written of Cromwell that few men have left behind them so much correspondence and official papers, but revealed in them so little of themselves and their inner convictions.⁵⁷ Very much the same can be said of Thomas Wriothesley; in the hundreds of letters that exist in draft or final form few afford any clue as to his private thoughts, concerns and anxieties. Not even the bundle of letters written to Wriothesley between 1536 and 1538, and collectively described as the Wriothesley Papers, reveal much about the human being who played such an important part in the history of England during the last years of Henry's reign. Nonetheless, through a consideration of all the available material it is

⁵⁷ S. E. Lehmberg, 'The Religious Beliefs of Thomas Cromwell', in R. L. DeMolen (ed.), *Leaders of the Reformation* (New Jersey, 1984), p. 134.

hoped that a convincing and coherent picture of Wriothesley’s aims, priorities and motivation will emerge.

2. In The Service of Wolsey and Cromwell

Introduction

Wriothesley's earliest employment was in the service of Thomas, cardinal Wolsey, Lord Chancellor, archbishop of York, the holder of innumerable offices of profit throughout the land, a man with almost unlimited authority within the realm, powerful enough to have secured the career of anyone he wished to advance and, so it was believed at the time, able to destroy the highest in the land below the king, had he chosen to do so.¹ Into that environment Wriothesley went with the assistance of Stephen Gardiner. By 1523 on behalf of the university, Gardiner was in fairly regular communication with Wolsey and that contact took him by 1524, into the service of the cardinal who possessed a well-attested eye for promising individuals.² By 1520 Cromwell then aged about thirty-five, had been practising as a solicitor for some time and he too was well known to Wolsey and joined the cardinal's service and initially was mostly engaged in legal business.³

The years in which Wriothesley served his political 'apprenticeship' (1527-36) were arguably the most momentous in the Tudor period, witnessing the resolution of the doubts over the validity of the Aragon marriage, the Anne Boleyn affair, the break with Rome, northern rebellion and the subjection of the church in England to the will

¹ P. Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of Thomas Wolsey* (London, 1990) is the best and most authoritative work on Wolsey currently available, though it has little to say about Thomas Wriothesley in its 639 pages. See also J. A. Guy, *The Cardinal's Court; The Impact of Thomas Wolsey in Star Chamber* (Hassocks, 1977); S. J. Gunn and P. G. Lindley, eds. *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, state and art* (Cambridge, 1991).

² G. Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic: The Life of Stephen Gardiner* (Oxford, 1990), ch. 1, in which there is a detailed review of Gardiner's early life and his introduction into Wolsey's household.

³ R. B. Merriman, *The Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell* 2 vols. (Oxford, 1902), vol. 1, pp. 9, 14-5.

of the sovereign.⁴ Although the young Thomas Wriothesley was in no sense the instigator or director of these events he was increasingly and intimately involved with those who were, and his efficient service to Wolsey and Cromwell prepared the ground for his own emergence into real political prominence in the mid-1540s.

The Early Years

Wriothesley left Trinity Hall, Cambridge, after two or three years studying law, probably without having taken any degree, although in 1522 (by which time he was seventeen), he and Paget were included among the *scholastici* of Trinity College.⁵ On a date which cannot now be accurately determined, but about 1524-5, Wriothesley joined the service of Thomas Cromwell, and through him, that of Wolsey, on the recommendation and with the support of Stephen Gardiner.⁶ Wriothesley found himself therefore with powerful patrons in whose employment he worked for the best part of the next fifteen years, and by the late 1520s he was acting as a confidential clerk to the Lord Chancellor. Gardiner had read Canon and Civil Law at Trinity Hall and by 1522 had secured doctorates in both disciplines and thereafter undertook the obligatory teaching of other students. He became master of Trinity Hall and both Wriothesley and Paget joined his household and would not have found their mentor

⁴ Thomas Wriothesley was but one of several who entered government service in the 1520s and who rose to pre-eminent positions in the state in later years. Edward Seymour and John Dudley are the two most obvious examples.

⁵ PRO, SP. 1/223, fo. 154, (*LP*, Addenda, (1509-37), 1, 357), records that 'Wm Patchett and Thos Wryth... ele and Charles Wrythesle' were *scholastici of Collegium Divoie Trinitas* in 1522. There is also a reference to another 'Wryth' which may possibly be William, the brother of Thomas.

⁶ PRO, SP1/23 fo. 156-7, (*LP*, iii, (2), 1870), where Wriothesley is said to have corrected a draft of a document in December 1521, but it is doubtful if this ascription is correct as Wriothesley would only have been sixteen years old at the time.

‘wholly antipathetic to reformers’.⁷ If that indeed was the case Gardiner certainly changed with the passing of the years. Wriothesley’s subsequent education included an extended period in Paris with Gardiner in 1522-3 where he learned to speak French with such fluency as to create the prospect of a career in government service, while Gardiner may have become tutor to a son of the duke of Norfolk with whom he was closely associated for the rest of his life. It is perhaps not surprising that Wriothesley followed Gardiner to Wolsey’s court as his servant so quickly after his mentor, as Gardiner appeared to have formed a high opinion of his qualities and potential.⁸ That association became increasingly important when Gardiner became Henry’s principal secretary in July 1529. Much of Wriothesley’s work at first was of a clerical nature and, for example, involved him in a domestic dispute between the earl and countess of Oxford regarding land holdings.⁹

Wriothesley frequently added the endorsements to official documents including one letter to the King inscribed ‘a copy of a letter from the lords of Scotland to the king’s highness’, which suggests a high degree of confidence in one so inexperienced. Wriothesley’s involvement with Wolsey’s Cardinal College at Oxford occupied some part of his time for years, and in July 1525 he prepared the set of instructions which detailed what buildings should be demolished at St. Fridewide’s monastery to enable

⁷ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 11. This section of the thesis owes much to Redworth as well as to Muller whose two books on the life and letters of Stephen Gardiner have already been noted in the previous chapter. J. A. Muller, *Stephen Gardiner and the Tudor Reaction*, (Cambridge, 1926), p. 10. On Gardiner’s earlier reformism see D. MacCulloch, ‘Two dons in politics: Thomas Cranmer and Stephen Gardiner 1503-33’, *HJ*, 37 (1994), pp. 1-22, which traces the similarities between the early careers of Cranmer and Gardiner under royal patronage until ‘the experiences of 1532 (which) would permanently shape their roles in the political and religious game’ on opposite sides of the religious debate.

⁸ It is also noteworthy that at about the same time as Gardiner and soon after Wriothesley joined Wolsey’s service, so did Cromwell. Within months Paget also attached himself to the latter. It argues a clear perception of the administrative potential of a number of very able young men, all of whom rose to high office in the state.

⁹ PRO, SP.1/28, fo. 34, (*LP*, iv, (1), 106).

construction work for the new college to commence,¹⁰ and prepared the writ directed to the county sheriff of Oxford and Berkshire in October 1525 to deliver up possession of the site of St. Fridewide's. As work proceeded Wriothesley drafted a patent in December 1525, corrected by Cromwell who had the oversight of the work, for seven monasteries and their lands to be sold to help to finance the new foundation¹¹ together with the customs and demesnes of innumerable manors.¹² Wriothesley also drafted a licence to incorporate lands at twenty one different locations for the use of Wolsey's college,¹³ and only a short while later a patent in Wriothesley's hand, amended by Cromwell, itemised the jewels and plate delivered to officers of his household.¹⁴

Wriothesley was also concerned with foreign affairs, preparing a memorandum of matters to be dealt with at the ratification of the treaty between France and England in September 1525, which detailed the names of those attending, the procedure for the formal ceremony and specified the accommodation to be provided and the 'ordering of the chapel at Greenwich'.¹⁵ At the end of 1526 Wriothesley's name appears on letters drafted for Wolsey to Francis I of France, and Louise of Savoy.¹⁶ About the same time Dr. John London wrote to Wriothesley seeking his support for proposals to improve conditions at several Oxford colleges, complaining that 'sixteen have decayed in these

¹⁰ PRO, Exchr T. R. Misc. Books, vol. 102, p. 42, (*LP*, iv, (1), 1499, (26)).

¹¹ Patent Rolls, C.66, 644, *LP*, iv, (1), 833.

¹² PRO, SP. 1/36, fo. 217, (*LP*, iv, (1), 1834); SP. 1/42, fo. 39, (*LP*, iv, (2), 3141), SP. 1/44, fo. 221, (*LP*, iv, (2), 3537-8), SP. 1/47, fo. 43, (*LP*, iv, (2), 4001), SP. 1/52, fos. 42-67, (*LP*, iv, (2), 5117). The state papers of the period are littered with references to 'Wolsey's Colleges', the lands used for its foundations and the money received and spent upon it. The sums involved were substantial and in the six months from September 1526 to April 1527, £2,342 was delivered to Cardinal's College, and in a period of three years to 1529, £4,684 was spent, and in total probably as much as £20,000. PRO, SP. 1/40, fos. 110-17, (*LP*, iv, (2), 2738), *LP*, iv, (2), 3536.

¹³ PRO, SP. 1/32, fos. 59-66, (*LP*, iv, (1), 650).

¹⁴ PRO, SP. 1/34, fos. 250-1, (*LP*, iv, (1), 1385-6), SP. 1/36, fo. 384, (*LP*, iv, (1), 1620), SP. 1/31, fos. 11-2, (*LP*, iv, (1), 388), SP. 1/33, fo. 69, (*LP*, iv, (1), 979), SP. 1/39, fo. 3, (*LP*, iv, (1), 2347-8), *LP*, iv, (1), 2379. Merriman, *Life and Letters*, pp. 48-52.

¹⁵ *LP*, iv, (1), 1633.

¹⁶ PRO, SP. 1/40, fos. 88-91, (*LP*, iv, (2), 2724, 2725).

few years' and that the number of scholars had reduced to one hundred and forty, suggesting that some colleges were suffering as a result of Wolsey's new creation.¹⁷ Even at this early date in his career Wriothesley was thought to have some influence with Wolsey.

More mundane and routine tasks fell to him with the preparation of the minutes of two awards made by Cromwell in arbitration hearings in April and late 1527 involving merchants from London and Normandy.¹⁸ The convenience of arbitration enabled the nobility, as 'good lords', to mediate in disputes among their own households and between neighbours, though the Chancery court and the court of Star Chamber increasingly undertook that function.¹⁹ He also drafted the result of an involved inquisition upon the death of the wealthy landowner Sir William Compton, formerly Henry's under treasurer and groom of the stool,²⁰ and early in 1529 he prepared a list of the debts due to Cromwell by 'statutes, bills and obligations'.²¹ At some date which cannot now be determined, but which may correspond with Wolsey's decreasing influence in 1529, Wriothesley gave most of his attention to work for Cromwell. In the same year he attached himself to Edmund Peckham, cofferer of the Household,²² and it is likely that his three years working with him provided a valuable

¹⁷ *LP*, iv, (2), 2735.

¹⁸ PRO, SP. 1/41, fo. 154, (*LP*, iv, (2), 3032), *LP*, iv, (2), 5216. Arbitration was commonly used in all strata of society on account of its relative speed and cheapness. Guy, *Cardinal's Court*, pp. 44-5, 97-105.

¹⁹ W. J. Jones, *The Elizabethan Court of Chancery* (Oxford, 1967).

²⁰ PRO, SP. 1/49, fo. 3, (*LP*, iv, (2), 4442 (6)). One of the consequences of the death was that Wriothesley prepared the patent that granted some of Compton's former offices to Nicholas Carew, Henry's master of horse. *LP*, iv, (2), 4583.

²¹ PRO, SP. 1/53, fo. 42-58, (*LP*, iv, (3), 5330).

²² *LP*, iv, (3), 5979 and PRO, SP. 1/66, fo. 148, (*LP*, v, 315), *LP*, v, 320. Edmund Peckham remained a lifelong friend of Wriothesley and in a letter to Cromwell he asked 'I beseeche your lordship to returne your goodnesse to maister coffere and to thank hym for me... howe moche I have been bound in tymes past your lordship knoweth'. PRO, SP. 1/143, fo. 13, (*LP*, xiv, (1), 233). Some fifteen years later for a short period in October 1549 about the time of the deposition of the duke of Somerset and the *coup* of the duke of Northumberland, he was lieutenant of the Tower. *CSP, Edward*, 10/9, nos.

introduction to the financial aspects of government. He settled in April 1528 the terms of a letter in Henry's name reprimanding his sister Margaret about her involvement with another man, 'that is not, nor may not be of right, her husband'.²³ The papal court at Rome had issued a sentence of divorce between Margaret and her husband the earl of Angus.²⁴

The most cursory reading of the state papers shows that under Wolsey and Cromwell, Wriothesley was in one way or another engaged in every aspect of the state machine, whether legal, political, religious, or in foreign affairs, and that gave him a comprehensive understanding of the workings of government. He was in close daily contact with royal servants and local officials and magnates at all levels of central and regional government, and this helped him to establish good working relationships with many who were to attain high office in the years that followed. He implemented the policies promoted by his masters, executing their orders and directives, but as the years passed, more and more frequently he acted with a degree of independence made possible by the confidence that they and the king reposed in him, a confidence born of reliable, conscientious service in many fields. His work proved to Henry that there was someone in Cromwell's office who could be trusted to carry out instructions and could accordingly be used as a king's messenger.²⁵ Well before his formal appointment as secretary in 1540, Wriothesley was identified as Henry's secretary, and several letters in the late 1530s are addressed to 'Right Worshipful Master Wriothesley'.²⁶ Paget,

14, 45. Peckham later became one of Wriothesley's executors, (see p. 313 below), and outlived him to continue in the service of the crown under Mary.

²³ *LP*, iv, (2), 4131.

²⁴ *LP*, iv, (2), 4130 Ironically in view of what he was trying to achieve for his master, Wolsey thought the divorce to be illegal and advised Henry that the 'marriage' was adulterous.

²⁵ PRO, SP. 1/57, fo. 222, (*LP*, iv, (3), 6489).

²⁶ PRO, SP 7/1, *Wriothesley Deeds*, from Ellis Price to Wriothesley dated 28 April 1538, (*LP*, xiii, (1), 864) and others from William Petre to Wriothesley of 11 May 1538, PRO, SP 7/1 nos. 21, 22. (*LP*, xiii, (1), 973, 974). There are in all eighty five letters in SP 7/1.

Sadler and Petre were also in Cromwell's service by the end of the 1530s, and all of them later found themselves in positions of authority in the state.²⁷ Like many of those employed in government in the late 1520s Wriothesley became involved in the turmoils which surrounded Henry's attempts to resolve his matrimonial dispute with Catherine, and his dependability was much in demand in the next few years over Henry's 'great matter'.²⁸

Wriothesley and Henry's 'Great Matter'

The prolonged and convoluted story of Henry's divorce from Catherine in the face of bitter hostility is fully rehearsed by Scarisbrick and other historians of the period and does not require a detailed retelling here.²⁹ What Henry wanted was a male heir which Catherine could not provide, and what he ultimately obtained was a new church in England. That came about almost as a by-product of his marriage to Anne Boleyn, by the rejection of papal supremacy (which became almost inevitable in the circumstances in which the divorce was achieved), giving rise to the establishment of the royal supremacy in its place and the beginning of the reformation of religion.³⁰

Gardiner had been involved early on in the divorce proceedings, in taking the king's book to Rome and in the preparation of a closely argued response to Fisher's repudiation of the king's case for the divorce. Henry's confidence in Wolsey was

²⁷ See the following biographies: Gammon, *Statesman and Schemer*; A. J. Slavin, *Politics and Profit: A Study of Sir Ralph Sadler, 1505-47* (Cambridge, 1966); F. G. Emmison, *Tudor Secretary: Sir William Petre at Court and Home* (London, 1961).

²⁸ PRO, SP. 1/142, fo. 202, (LP, xiv, (1), 190).

²⁹ J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London, 1968), ch. VII, 'The Canon Law of the Divorce' and ch. VIII, 'The Struggle for the Divorce', pp. 163-241; G. De C. Parmiter, *The King's Great Matter: A Study of Anglo-Papal Relations, 1527-1534* (London, 1967); D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer, A Life* (New Haven and London, 1996), chs. 3 and 4; H. A. Kelly, *The Matrimonial Trials of Henry VIII* (Stanford, Cal. 1976); E. Surtz and V. Murphy, (eds.), *The Divorce Tracts of Henry VIII* (Angers, 1988).

³⁰ In Peter Marshall's phrase, the supremacy was the 'central and continuing preoccupation of the Henrician reformation': 'The Rood of Boxley, the Blood of Hailes and the Defence of the Henrician Church', *JEH*, 46, 4 (1995), p. 690.

severely shaken in the middle of 1528 just when the cardinal appeared to be nearing the settlement of the seemingly intractable problem.³¹ Wriothesley played a small role in transcribing some parts of three treatises on the divorce issues, to one of which Bishop Fisher added his own comments.³² Henry's wish for papal, conciliar and public support for divorce gave rise to a mass of written and printed justifications 'growing into vast volumes'.³³ Gardiner, as others, had been sent to Rome to press, even to intimidate, the pope into agreeing to allow the whole issue of the divorce to be resolved in English law courts.³⁴ Wriothesley must have been aware of all these developments as he frequently saw letters addressed to Henry. Indeed the earl of Sussex assumed that Wriothesley would be made familiar with one he wrote: 'I doubt not but ye shalbe made privy'.³⁵

By the end of 1528 the whole court including Cromwell, could sense the growing change in Henry's attitude to Wolsey, who was perceived as having failed to secure the divorce for Henry.³⁶ In May 1529 on Cromwell's instructions, Wriothesley had written a letter to Wolsey advising him as to his future behaviour, recommending that he 'restrain his manner of life' and restrict his lavish building programme, and not only that concerning his college.³⁷ Disaster for Wolsey could spell the same for Cromwell and in July 1529 Wriothesley prepared Cromwell's will, and endorsed it 'a

³¹ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 198 et seq. in which there is a full review of all the issues concerning the divorce. See also Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal*, pp. 501-6; G. W. Bernard, 'The Fall of Anne Boleyn' *EHR*, 106 (1990), his 'Anne Boleyn's Religion', *HJ*, 36 (1993); E. W. Ives, 'Anne Boleyn and the early Reformation in England: The Contemporary Evidence', *HJ*, 37, 2 (1994), his 'The Fall of Anne Boleyn Reconsidered', *EHR*, 107 (1992).

³² PRO, SP. 1/54, fo. 129, (*LP*, iv, (3), 5729), *LP*, iv, (3), 6738.

³³ PRO, SP. 1/42, fo. 158, (*LP*, iv, (2), 3231).

³⁴ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 17-22.

³⁵ PRO, SP. 7/1, fo. 59, (*LP*, xii, (1), 631).

³⁶ Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal*, ch. 13, 'Wolsey's Downfall', argues that Wolsey's dismissal from office was a calculated act of policy on Henry's part to further the divorce negotiations.

³⁷ PRO, SP. 1/57, fo. 92, (*LP*, iv, (3), 6368). See Gunn and Lindley, *Cardinal Wolsey*,

copy of my master his will'.³⁸ Wolsey surrendered the great seal on 17 October 1529.

Within a few months Cromwell was asked by Wolsey 'in his disgrace, to solicit his affairs at court' following the preparation of the articles of impeachment against him.

While Wolsey was regarded with intense dislike if not hatred by his many enemies, including Anne Boleyn, the loyal Cromwell promised that he would during his life be with him 'in heart, spirit, prayer and service', and there is no reason to doubt his sincerity.³⁹ It appeared to Wolsey at the time that Cromwell was his 'only aider in this mine intolerable anxiety and heaviness'.⁴⁰

On the eve of Corpus Christi, 1529, Wriothesley with William Brereton, called upon the cardinal to obtain from him his seal to a 'certain instrument of writing', which may have been the petition from the clergy and nobility of England to the pope, urging him to annul the king's marriage.⁴¹ The sending of Wriothesley was meant to demean his former master (as happened on other occasions),⁴² and in July 1530 he disposed of some of the extensive possessions and properties belonging to the fallen cardinal.⁴³

The next month he prepared the written record of the cardinal's vestments and on 30 November, the day after the cardinal's death he settled details of the proposed commemorations. Henry had made Wolsey and he also destroyed him, as precisely ten years later he was to destroy Cromwell. Wriothesley had a hand in both those events,

³⁸ PRO, SP. 1/54, fo. 269, (LP, iv, (3), 5772); Merriman, *Life and Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 54-63. The will was extensively altered subsequently by Cromwell. Sadler and Stephen Vaughan received bequests but not Wriothesley.

³⁹ PRO, SP. 1/57, fo. 294, (LP, iv, (3), 6571).

⁴⁰ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol.1, pt.ii, 352, (LP, iv, (3), 6098, 6203-4, 6554).

⁴¹ G. Cavendish, *Thomas Wolsey, late Cardinal, his Life and Death written by George Cavendish His Gentleman-Usher*, ed. R. Lockyer (London, 1962), p. 179.

⁴² William Fitzwilliam, a dedicated supporter of Cromwell, with Norfolk assisted in Cromwell's arrest precisely ten years later.

⁴³ PRO, Exchr. T. R. Misc. Books, vol. 117, p. 39, (LP, iv, (3), 6516). See Chapuys' letter on Wolsey's fall (25 October 1529). LP, iv, (3), 6026.

though the king's disappointed matrimonial expectations and the insidious poison from the tongues of enemies helped the process in each case.⁴⁴

Wolsey's disgrace and death simply forced the responsibility of obtaining the annulment onto other shoulders. It is clear that from 1531 onwards, Henry's wishes regarding the divorce and other matters of state were often communicated through letters written by Wriothesley personally or by the corrected drafts of clerks he supervised. In December Wriothesley drew a recognisance for Dr. de Augustinis of Venice to ensure the secrecy of matters concerning the 'late cardinal of York' mentioned in a book written by Augustinis and communicated to the duke of Norfolk.⁴⁵ Augustinis had been Wolsey's physician and secret agent and was a party to (possibly) treasonable correspondence with Francis I. Because there is more than a suspicion that Augustinis betrayed to Norfolk Wolsey's communications with the French ambassador Du Bellay, there was every reason to keep such negotiations quiet.⁴⁶ With William Brereton, Wriothesley also 'touted round the country' a petition signed by most of the adult peers, many of the abbots and some bishops, urging that the pope's stance over the divorce be ignored.⁴⁷ In May 1530 Wriothesley prepared an account of the sums spent by him, Brereton and Edward Leighton travelling to various parts of England in relation to the king's divorce, which continued to be energetically pursued despite the death of Wolsey, and with others of Wolsey's household, now under Cromwell's supervision, he continued the search for the solution demanded by

⁴⁴ Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal*, p. 596.

⁴⁵ PRO, SP. 1/58, fos. 23 and 215, (LP, iv, (3), 6599, 6763): Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal*, pp. 601-4, 607, 611, 628, 634. The same Dr. Augustine was still active in 1545, as he was authorised by Letters Patent to alienate to Wriothesley the lordships of the manors of Worthy Abbot, Bycketon Foughlerton and Leeford in Southampton in September 1545. HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 2, 131.

⁴⁶ LP, iv, (3), 6011.

⁴⁷ Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 164, quoting *House of Commons, 1509-58*, ed. S. T. Bindoff, (1982), iii, p. 664.

Henry. During 1531 Wriothesley became further involved in the process of securing the divorce, and on 30 January William Benet writing to Henry referred to his receipt from Wriothesley, then at Greenwich, of the 'three printed books on the king's cause'.⁴⁸ The treatise written by Stokesley, Edward Fox and de Burgo upon the unlawfulness of marrying a brother's wife or widow, upon which opinions had been garnered from universities at Orleans, Paris, Angers, Bourges, Toulouse, Bologna and Padua in addition to Cambridge and Oxford, was published in English in late 1531.⁴⁹ In July 1531 Wriothesley wrote to the English ambassadors in France, Francis Bryan and Bishop Edward Fox, to James V of Scotland in November, and to Carlisle, herald to the Scots king, explaining and justifying the king's intentions regarding Catherine.⁵⁰ Instructions speedily followed to Benet⁵¹ (sent to Rome to discuss matters face to face with the Pope), in December 1531, to Gardiner (there for the same purpose), and to Dr. Bonner on his proposed visit to Rome. A lengthy letter written partly by Wriothesley was sent to Bonner and Carne in February 1532 and made the important point that a judge had no claim to obedience outside his own jurisdiction, and that Henry could lawfully disobey a citation to Rome, a place 'most suspect and unsure'.⁵² It was a further step in the process of isolating Henry from any papal obligation.

There is no precise evidence as to Wriothesley's role in bringing matters to a final conclusion, but it is reasonable to assume that he continued to play a role in

⁴⁸ PRO, SP. 1/65, fo. 107, (LP, v, 68); *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 7, 279, 281.

⁴⁹ PRO, SP. 1/62, fos. 150-56, (LP, v, 5). 'The Determinations of the moste famous and mooste excellent vniversities of Italy and Fraunce...', in E. Surtz and V. Murphy (eds.), *The Divorce Tracts of Henry VIII*, (Angers, 1988); Kelly, *The Matrimonial Trials*, pp. 143, 177-81; Parmiter, *The King's Great Matter*, chs. vii and viii, pp. 120-151; Holinshed, *Chronicle*, vol. iii, 767-772.

⁵⁰ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 7, 281, (LP, v, 328).

⁵¹ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 281, states that Benet was secretly sympathetic to Catherine's situation. See also Parmiter, *The King's Great Matter*, where there are many references to Dr. William Benet. LP, v, 696, 834.

⁵² PRO, SP. 1/69, fos. 74 and 143, (LP, v, 742, 836); LP, v, 328, 611.

advancing the divorce and just as probably was aware of the implications of *Censurae academiarum* later translated as the *Determinations of the Universities*.⁵³ The *Glass of the Truth* which also came from the king's printer about September 1532, would surely have been known to Wriothesley.⁵⁴ It represented at the time the most radical view promulgated on the limitations of papal authority, and presaged the rejection of the papacy and Henry's assumption in June 1534 of the title of Supreme Head of the Church in England.⁵⁵

What made the divorce a issue of yet greater urgency at the end of 1532 was Anne Boleyn's pregnancy. She married Henry in January 1533, and gave birth to a daughter rather than the male heir the desperate desire for which had been the driving force over a period of six years behind the Aragon divorce. The Aragon marriage was dissolved by Cranmer in May 1533 on the ground that it was illicit and invalid *ab initio*. The dissolution was subsequently approved by parliament in the 1534 Act of Succession,⁵⁶ but the outcome was confrontation between Henry and the papacy and additional hostility from France and the empire. The convoluted divorce process over several years provided Wriothesley with the opportunity to identify himself with the king's wishes and policies, demonstrating that he had no sympathy for Catherine's position, despite the evidence in later years of his orthodox religious leanings.

⁵³ Surtz and Murphy, *The Divorce Tracts of Henry VIII*; Kelly, *The Matrimonial Trials*, p. 181.

⁵⁴ Kelly, *The Matrimonial Trials*, p. 123.

⁵⁵ 26, Henry VIII, c. 1.

⁵⁶ 25, Henry VIII, c. 28. Catherine had already been deprived of the royal style by proclamation. See P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin (eds.), *Tudor Royal Proclamations, The Early Tudors* (New Haven and London, 1964-9), i, pp. 209-11.

Cromwell's Private Secretary

Wriothesley became Cromwell's understudy in every clerical office controlled by his master and the one certain thing about the private office, says Elton, 'is the outstanding importance of Wriothesley-more than chief clerk, perhaps, but definitely a subordinate and not the head of the office; Cromwell alone was that'.⁵⁷ Wriothesley became the managing clerk, acting within the constraints imposed by his employer but having sufficient experience and competence to undertake on his own initiative a whole range of routine tasks with an authority which encouraged many to seek his advice and help on a multiplicity of matters. Letters to Cromwell would pass through his hands and he would not only see the replies, but often write them out and just as frequently draft them for his master's approval. It is perhaps not fanciful to suggest that this closeness with the *minutiae* of Cromwell's office enabled him to have a hand in or even influence policy, and many documents point to his close involvement with the details of the day to day affairs of the council. A list of the business it dealt with and a list of its decisions for a particular day are recorded in the state papers; Wriothesley's hand is clearly seen upon many of the reports.⁵⁸

About May 1530 Wriothesley had been appointed to the office of clerk of the signet, following his attachment as clerk to Edmund Peckham,⁵⁹ and for three or four years Wriothesley held both offices, which gave him the *entrée* into the king's own household, regular contact with the members of the privy chamber and with Henry himself. It was the appointment as clerk of the signet which began Wriothesley's

⁵⁷ Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government*, p. 304.

⁵⁸ *LP*, xii, (1), 815-6 included a discussion on the role of the king's daughters and how the elder (Mary) might be 'more apt to make a present alliance' with the intent that the king 'may at least have one friend'. See also PRO, SP. 1/121, fo. 203, (*LP*, xii, (2), 177). *St.P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt ii, 545.

⁵⁹ J. P. Collier (ed.), *Trevelyan Papers*, Camden Society, o.s. 57 (1857), p. 160. Wriothesley is frequently addressed as 'principal clerk of the signet' in the endorsements upon letters sent to him during the 1530s. His friendship with Peckham lasted the rest of their joint lives.

official career, and by the latter half of 1533 there is clear evidence that he was working for Cromwell, and on all the available material was Cromwell's representative in the privy seal office.⁶⁰ He was still in Peckham's service in 1532 according to Paget, though it is unlikely that his duties were allowed to interfere with his secretarial work for Cromwell. The handling of currency and the preparation of accounts under Peckham's direction, familiarised him with money management which became so important a part of his work as Lord Chancellor.⁶¹ While in the upper reaches of government desperate things were happening, the daily routine continued to be followed; Wriothesley still acted as Henry's messenger into 1530 and the household expenses for June showed that he received a fee of 4s. for 'riding to my lord of Canterbury at Ryegate'.⁶² In the same year Wriothesley was admitted to Gray's Inn, though there is no evidence that he was ever called to the bar nor practised as an advocate in court.

In 1535 the court of Augmentations was set up to deal with the mass of monastic property which became available for sale after the dissolution, and the commission ('The Mynute of the Commysion'), for the appointees to the court was first drafted by Wriothesley and corrected by Cromwell.⁶³ The breadth of his duties and responsibilities is shown by the number of occasions that he wrote out instructions to ambassadors in the form of signet letters ostensibly in the king's name but drafted in Cromwell's office.⁶⁴ Similarly he prepared a list of business to be dealt with by the

⁶⁰ PRO, SP. 1/78, fo. 71, and SP. 1/79, fos. 7-8, (*LP*, vi, 928, 1067).

⁶¹ *LP*, v, App. 37.

⁶² PRO, SP. 1/57, fo. 222, (*LP*, iv, (3), 6489). As David Loades reminds us a king's messenger always ranked one degree above his proper status by virtue of his function. D. M. Loades, *The Tudor Court* (rev. ed. London, 1992), p. 4.

⁶³ PRO, E.36, Exchequer T.R. Misc. Books, vol. 116, fo. 50; (*LP*, x, 721, (4)).

⁶⁴ BL, *Add. MSS.* 25114, fo. 110. *LP*, ix, 838, (Henry's instruction) and 848, (further instructions from Cromwell).

council and wrote out its decisions on the particular day.⁶⁵ These are but examples of his regular involvement in the day by day routine of council work. Cromwell was not entirely at home in foreign policy matters and left much of the detail to Wriothesley.⁶⁶

Wriothesley enjoyed a good relationship with princess Mary over many years, which may explain why he was employed to carry letters to her from Cromwell complaining about her attitude to the princess Elizabeth which at times was demonstrably hostile. In August 1534 he was sent to question Lady Hussey in the Tower about her meetings with Mary: Henry was obsessed about her and the title of 'princess', the use of which was forbidden. In early June 1536 Mary had rejected the royal supremacy which made her a traitor according to law,⁶⁷ and her action implicated and led to the arrest of Anthony Browne and Francis Bryan. Their freedom was only secured by her capitulation to the pressure put upon her by members of Henry's court and council. Once she had submitted to the Act of Supremacy however,⁶⁸ Henry's attitude changed, one consequence of which was that separate households were established in June 1536 both for her and the infant Elizabeth.⁶⁹ Mary wrote to Wriothesley: 'Good Master Secretary how much I am bound to you, which have not only travailed, when I was drowned in folly, to recover me before I sunk'. His concern for her welfare is reflected in the friendly letter she wrote to him in November 1536, thanking him for his consideration for her, and members of her household.⁷⁰ It was to

⁶⁵ BL, *Add. MSS.* 25114, fo. 89 and fo. 222; PRO, SP. 1/119, fos. 105-8, (*LP*, xii, (1), 1091); *LP*, xii (1), 815-6; xii, (2), 177).

⁶⁶ D. L. Potter, 'Diplomacy in the mid 16th century: England and France, 1536-1550' unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Cambridge, 1973, p. 34.

⁶⁷ D. M. Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor, Politics, Government and Religion in England, 1553-1558* 2nd ed. (London, 1991), ch. 1.

⁶⁸ *LP*, vii, 1036, and x, Introduction, xxxix.

⁶⁹ PRO, SP. 1/104, fos. 210-13, (*LP*, x, 1186-7).

⁷⁰ *LP*, xi, 1082. She wrote to Wriothesley, 'I received your letter... which compels me to do what I never did to any man except the king (and) the lord privy seal... (to) write a letter of thanks... '

Wriothesley that Mary's companion Lady Kingston wrote to ask him to approach Cromwell in the hope that he could 'move' Henry to send his own personal physician Dr. Butts to attend upon Mary in her illness.⁷¹ Earlier in 1533 Wriothesley had helped to restore Mary's cook to her position in the household,⁷² and in late 1539 when she asked for his help to obtain clothing for one of her footman, he intervened to help. She concluded her letter to him saying, 'I am glad in hoope that I shall se you shortly, as knoweth god, to whome I commite you, Your assured frend duryng my lyfe Marye'.⁷³ There is no reason to suppose that the warm sentiments were not genuine. At the end of 1539 Wriothesley was sent by Cromwell to call upon Mary and sound her out over a proposal of marriage from Duke Philip of Bavaria,⁷⁴ though her response was unenthusiastic because of the duke's different religious inclinations. They met (and kissed according to Marillac), and she accepted a gift from Philip.⁷⁵ She wrote to Cromwell reporting how she had responded 'touching the matter declared by Mr. Wriothesley' and added that 'the king will always find me his obedient daughter, subject and servant', though 'she would prefer never to enter that kind of religion', in reference to Philip's Lutheran convictions.⁷⁶ It was even reported abroad that she and Philip had married, (Marillac expected the marriage within fifteen to twenty days)⁷⁷ but Henry found means to kill off the idea although matters had developed to the point that

⁷¹ *LP*, Addenda, vol. 2, 1294.

⁷² C. Erickson, *Bloody Mary* (1978), p. 175.

⁷³ HMC, *Bath Longleat Manuscripts*, Seymour Papers, vol. 2 (London, 1907), p. 7.

⁷⁴ *LP*, Addenda, vol. 2, 1425-27. Philip's 'offer', including detailed financial proposals, is set out in full in *LP*, which also record the marriage proposal involving Charles, duke of Orléans in April 1538 (*LP*, Addenda, vol. 2, 1324) the response to which was written by Wriothesley, and an even earlier suggestion canvassed in March 1527, that she should become the wife of Francis I. (*LP*, Addenda, vol. 1, 531). At that time Mary was but eleven years old. Nothing came of any of these ideas.

⁷⁵ Wriothesley had discussed and agreed with Philip the type of gift suitable to be given to Mary: 'a cross of diamonds set with four pearls and one pearl pendant at the same'. She had however to give it up to Henry. PRO, SP. 1/155, fo. 170, (*LP*, xiv, (2), 737), *LP*, xiv, (2), 744; H. F. M. Prescott, *Mary Tudor* (London, 1940), pp. 93-4.

⁷⁶ *LP*, xiv, (2), 696, 697.

a draft treaty was prepared,⁷⁸ and Philip left England a disappointed man, with the emperor no doubt much relieved at the news.⁷⁹ Later Wriothesley presented her with a token from her father, and had instructions to try to persuade her to bow to the king's wishes regarding the changes which had occurred in his church. Wriothesley found her amenable and pleasant, apparently compliant, despite her unspoken caveat. He also made a call upon Elizabeth, the extent of whose understanding and education was mentioned in terms of admiration that one so young (she was six years old), could be so accomplished.⁸⁰ Henry's treatment of Mary over a period of years had been brutal and Wriothesley's description of Henry to the duchess of Milan as 'a most gentle gentleman, his nature being so benign and pleasant that I think till this day no man hath heard many angry words pass his mouth', can only be seen in the context of his efforts to advance Henry's suit for marriage with the duchess.⁸¹

Wriothesley and the Reform of Religion

Despite all his apparent concern for the Princess Mary, Wriothesley played an important part in the process of the reforms which were precipitated by Henry's divorce from her mother. The Aragon divorce and the manner of its achievement drew the king down the road of religious reform and this led to a significant change in the public appearance of worship by the end of his life.⁸² Whatever might have been his innermost thoughts at the time, Wriothesley adapted to the changes wrought by

⁷⁷ *LP*, xiv, (2), 744. J. Kaulek, *Correspondence Politique de Mm de Castillon and de Marillac*, (Paris, 1885), p. 148.

⁷⁸ *LP*, xiv, (2), 733.

⁷⁹ PRO, SP. 1/242, fos. 263-5, (*LP*, Addenda, vol. 2, 1425-7).

⁸⁰ *LP*, xiv, (2), 697.

⁸¹ *St P of Henry VIII*, vol. 8, 146, (*LP*, xiv, (1), 194).

⁸² R. Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (Basingstoke, 1993); Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*; V. Murphy, 'The Literature and Propaganda of Henry VIII's First Divorce' in D. MacCulloch (ed.), *The Reign of Henry VIII; Politics, Policy and Piety* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 135-58.

Henry's and Cromwell's schemes. In August 1532 Wriothesley wrote out a deposition in his own hand which recorded that the prior of the Crutched friars (Crossed Freres) in London, had declared that the king was determined to put down certain religious houses, and that if he did so 'he should be called *Destructor Fidei*' instead of *Defensor Fidei*.⁸³

Wriothesley, on Henry's instructions, prepared a draft of the new coronation oath (amended by Henry in his own hand) which declared that the sovereign would maintain the rights of the church so far as they were not prejudicial to his own jurisdiction.⁸⁴ A hand-written note of Wriothesley's in October 1534 sympathetic to the king's mood, proposed to limit the income of bishops, allowing them just enough for their needs, substantial as those clearly were, and suggesting that the residue of their annual incomes be handed over to the state.⁸⁵ So far as can be judged this was the first occasion that Wriothesley initiated a scheme designed to increase the crown's revenue at the expense of the church, though the plan to seize part of its revenue did reflect contemporary opinion.⁸⁶ Wriothesley prepared a memorandum for Henry with a list of suggestions for the use of the money realised by monastic sales, among which were proposals for building new or restoring existing hospitals, repairing highways, and paying garrisons. There is also a note in his hand in 1538 referring to the disposal of Crown revenues which suggested that Henry might expend 5000 marks a year on highway repairs or other works 'whereby valiant beggars may be set to work'. The

⁸³ PRO, SP. 1/70, fo. 201, (LP, v. 1209).

⁸⁴ LP, vii, 1378. See W. Ullmann, "This Realm of England is an Empire" *JEH*, vol. 30, 2 (1979), pp. 175-203 for a discussion and in particular, p. 183.

⁸⁵ LP, vii, 1355-6. See R. W. Hoyle, 'The Origins of the Dissolution of the Monasteries', *HJ*, 38, 2 (1995), pp. 275-305, and p. 292.

⁸⁶ P. M. Hembry, *The Bishops of Bath and Wells, 1540-1640: Social and Economic Problems* (London, 1967), p. 60. See also Chapuys letter to the emperor Charles of 28 November 1534. LP, vii, 1482 (I), and CSP, Spanish, iv, (1), 367, 371. See also Petition of Thomas Lord Darcy, (July 1529), LP, iv, (3), 5749, at p. 2554.

scheme would have the double advantage of completing essential repairs and providing useful employment to vagabonds, perennially a Tudor irritant.⁸⁷ Little if anything came of any of those suggestions.

In September 1538 Wriothesley took a hand in suppressing monastic houses. In June Henry ordered the confiscation of all the treasures of the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury, and the public burning of the saint's bones, under a 'process' against St. Thomas of Canterbury, and it was Wriothesley who carried out his directions.⁸⁸ But that was not all. A letter from Husee to Lord Lisle the same month reported that 'Mr. Wriothesley and Mr. Pollard hath been at Winchester about such the king's affairs as they had at Canterbury'.⁸⁹ Wriothesley writing to Cromwell, said that they had personally supervised the destruction of the shines at both places, and 'made an end of the shrine' at the cathedral of St. Swithin's. There was 'no pece of gold nay any oon ring... nevertheless we think the sylver alone thereof well aboute nere to twoo thousande markes. We have also receyved into our possession the crosse of emeraudes, the crosse called Hierusalum, an other crosse of gold, twoo chalices of gold with some sylver plate'.⁹⁰ Apart from those valuables all there was worth taking was an altar and it with the rest Wriothesley detailed in an inventory which he prepared.⁹¹ Unfortunately a former prior had disposed of the plate so that there was very little left to remove, and about all that was worth taking down was the altar.⁹² Gardiner keeping in step with Henry's campaign for the reform of religious abuses, expressed himself in favour of the destruction of Becket's shrine, and Wriothesley

⁸⁷ *LP*, xiii, (2), 1; J. Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials* 3 vols. (Oxford, 1822), vol. 1, p. 326.

⁸⁸ *LP*, xiii, (2), 133.

⁸⁹ *Lisle Letters*, v, 224.

⁹⁰ PRO, SP, 1/132, fo. 194; (*LP*, xiii, (1), 1085).

⁹¹ *LP*, xiii, (2), 402.

⁹² PRO, SP, 1/136, fo. 212, (*LP*, xiii, (2), 401).

dutifully informed Cromwell of this. Gardiner also 'wished that the like were done at Winchester', his own cathedral, as indeed it had been a few days earlier.⁹³ It is difficult to believe that he was unaware of this. Wriothesley planned to move on to the abbeys of Hyde and St. Mary's 'to sweep away all the rotten bones that be called relics'.⁹⁴ The same action was taken at Chichester in December 1538 and orders given for destruction of the shrine and the removal to the Tower of the bones of a bishop 'which they call St. Richard'.⁹⁵ At the end of 1538 when Wriothesley, with Vaughan and Carne were in Brussels as Henry's ambassadors, their reception was less than cordial due principally to the profound hostility caused there by the desecration of Becket's tomb and the destruction of the relics.⁹⁶ Others kept Wriothesley informed of the progress of the dissolution and John Stokesley (not the bishop of London) reported his pleasure at being able to suppress the friars of Caversham and his hopes to continue the process elsewhere.⁹⁷

The success of the monastic dissolution in England was an encouragement to capitalise on the value of religious houses in Ireland and in mid March Wriothesley instructed the commissioners to suppress the monasteries at Kilkenny, Tipperary, Wexford and Waterford, and to assign the revenue for the administration of justice there. This was clearly a financial measure judging by the use to which the proceeds were to be put.⁹⁸ Wriothesley also drafted the authority to other commissioners 'touching the houses [monasteries] to be altered or dissolved' which provided that if

⁹³ *St. P. of Henry VIII*, vol. 8, pp. 51-2; Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 85-6; *Lisle Letters*, v, 224-6.

⁹⁴ PRO, SP. 1/136, fo. 212, (*LP*, xiii, (2), 401).

⁹⁵ PRO, SP. 1/140, fo. 88-91, (*LP*, xiii, (2), 1049). For the inventory of valuables, see *ibid*, 1103.

⁹⁶ *LP*, xiii, (2), 880, 995.

⁹⁷ PRO, SP. 1/155, fo. 133-4, (*LP*, xiv, (2), 684). See also L. B. Smith, *Tudor Prelates and Politics, 1536-1558* (Princeton 1953), p. 174; BL, *Harleian*, 604, fo. 96.

⁹⁸ CSP, Ireland, vol. 6, fo. 30, (*LP*, xiii, (1), 641). B. Bradshaw, *The dissolution of the religious orders in Ireland under Henry VIII* (London, 1974).

any of the 'heads' were found to be refusing to submit to the king's supremacy they were to be imprisoned pending further punishment. This directive led to the suppression of the great abbeys of Reading, Glastonbury and Chichester, and the execution of their abbots.⁹⁹

By 1537 supplicants were appealing to Wriothesley as they were to Cromwell, for some morsel or larger gift, reward or benefit, frequently the result of a monastic visitation. The earl of Northumberland asked him to arrange an interview with Cromwell, and the earl of Rutland sought his co-operation to secure for him the dissolved abbey of Croxton in Leicestershire near his 'poor hous' at Belvoir, having first solicited the support of Cromwell.¹⁰⁰ In August 1538 Wriothesley was asked by Anthony Birks of Lye in Kent to arrange the transfer to him of one of the suppressed houses.¹⁰¹

Given his position as confidential secretary to Cromwell and presumably implementing Cromwell's reforms, Wriothesley received a letter from Ellis Price, priest, who wrote him in April 1538 asking whether he could use his good offices to arrange for the restoration of the destroyed image of Dderfel Gadarn at Llandderfel in North Wales.¹⁰² There is no clear evidence of any response being sent by Wriothesley and it is unlikely that he wrote in encouraging terms in view of the current attack on superstitious usages fronted by Cromwell and supported by Henry. On that basis it is not difficult to explain the significance of a letter written to Wriothesley in mid June

⁹⁹ The abbots of those three monasteries refused their submission and all ultimately perished. PRO, Exchequer Papers, vol. 116, fo. 1, (*LP* xiv, (1), 1189), SP. 1/153, fo. 210, (*LP*, xiv, (2), 272).

¹⁰⁰ PRO, SP. 7/1, no. 10; (*LP*, xi, 530).

¹⁰¹ PRO, SP. 1/135, fo. 124, (*LP*, xiii, (2), 136).

¹⁰² PRO, SP. 7/1 no. 1, (*LP*, xiii, (1), 864). On Dderfel Gadarn see P. Marshall, 'The Rood of Boxley, The Blood of Hailes and the Defence of the Henrician Church', *JEH*, vol. 46, 4 (1995), and by the same author 'Papist as Heretic: The Burning of John Forest, 1538', *HJ*, 41, 2 (1998), pp. 351-374; J. G. Nicholls, (ed.), *Chronicle of the Greyfriars of London*, Camden Society, o.s., 53 (1851), p. 42.

1537 by Edward Bachelier of St. John's College, Cambridge. He wrote: 'I am so much bound to you who pulled me out of the blind darkness of our old religion and brought me to the light... and a house which continues to set forth the unfeigned verity of Christ's gospel'.¹⁰³ The letter may suggest that Wriothesley was perceived to be sympathetic to the evangelical posture to reform and given all the corroborative evidence it is reasonable to assume that in Cromwell's last years, he was prepared to adopt and implement Cromwell's attitude to the reformation whatever he may himself have thought. In any event the bishop of Thetford and the abbot of Whitby found cause to thank Wriothesley for his help in their suits.¹⁰⁴

An important task was given to Wriothesley in December 1537 to draft a form of oath which was required of those who had to subscribe to the acceptance of the Acts of Succession, and the extinction of the pope's authority.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore subscribers were required to advise Cromwell of any conspiracies, tales or rumours which were dishonourable to the king or members of the council.¹⁰⁶ Somewhat earlier in the same year Cromwell, Wriothesley and Richard Moryson (who later spoke so critically of Wriothesley) were among the laymen engaged with the bishops in the formulation of the *Institution of a Christian Man* (the 'Bishop's Book') of 1537.¹⁰⁷ Its final form was an unhappy amalgam of the catholic and evangelical. In February 1539, Wriothesley recommended from his ambassador's post in Brussels that English students should be restricted in their visits to Louvain in case they developed a liking for false doctrine.¹⁰⁸ About the same time Wriothesley had caused one Phillips well

¹⁰³ PRO, SP. 1/121, fo. 128, (LP, xii, (2), 95).

¹⁰⁴ PRO, SP, 7/1, nos. 62, 74, 85, (LP, xiii, (1), 867, 722, 769).

¹⁰⁵ Refusal to swear the earlier oath cost Bishop John Fisher and Thomas More their heads in 1535.

¹⁰⁶ PRO, SP. 1/241, fo. 245, (LP, Addenda, vol. 1, 1275).

¹⁰⁷ J. K. McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics under Henry VIII and Edward VI* (Oxford 1965), p. 162. PRO, SP. 1/123, fos. 24-5, and 82-3, (LP, xii, (2), 289, 330).

¹⁰⁸ PRO, SP. 1/143, fo. 54, (LP, xiv, (1), 248, 264, 393). Hembry, *Bishops of Bath and Wells*, p. 65.

known to be a devotee of the pope, to be arrested and taken into the custody of his servants. For reasons which never appear to have been explained satisfactorily Phillips escaped and though he was later recaptured Wriothesley's conduct in the matter gave cause for some concern about his own role in the whole matter.¹⁰⁹ There is little in the pattern of Wriothesley's actions in the late 1530s to suggest that he disapproved of the reformist policies initiated by Cromwell and sanctioned by Henry, but before the decade was over there were clear indications of the dangers that these policies might generate.

The Rebellions of 1536

In the autumn of 1536 serious unrest had broken out in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire provoked by the monastic dissolution, economic and social problems in the northern counties and the plans for the reformation of the church which were anticipated.¹¹⁰ The rebellion was serious and indeed might have swamped Henry had the rebels been so minded and canvassed for the support which was available and waiting in Scotland, and could have been obtained from Rome and France.¹¹¹ Because of its religious connotations and the numbers of the nobility and gentry committed to it, the Pilgrimage of Grace came close to costing Henry his throne.¹¹² Wriothesley was

¹⁰⁹ PRO, SP. 1/143, fo. 54, (*LP*, xiv, (1), 233, 247-8, 257, 264, 308). Phillips was attainted under 31, Henry VIII, c.15.

¹¹⁰ PRO, SP. 1/120, fos. 271-4; C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 119.

¹¹¹ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, pp. 341/2. R. B. Wernham, *Before the Armada, The Growth of English Foreign Policy, 1485-1588* (London, 1966), p. 136; M. L. Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace, A Study of the Rebel Armies of 1536* (Manchester 1996), pp. 170, 297, *et passim*. M. E. James, "Obedience and Dissent in Henrician England: The Lincolnshire Rebellion of 1536", *P&P*, 48 (1970).

¹¹² There are extensive references in *LP* to the events of the latter part of 1536 and the early months of 1537. M. H. Dodds and R. Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Exeter Conspiracy*, 2, vols. (Cambridge, 1915); Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace*; A. G. Dickens, 'Secular and religious motivation in the pilgrimage of grace', *Studies in Church History*, 4 (1967), pp. 39-64; C. S. L. Davies, 'The pilgrimage of grace re-considered' *P&P*, 41 (1968), pp. 54-75; 'Popular religion and the pilgrimage of grace', in A. Fletcher and J. Stephenson, (eds.), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 58-91; Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*, p. 119; PRO,

soon absorbed in the serious financial, logistical and other problems which the rising caused the government and Henry relied heavily upon him to make the financial arrangements to keep the troops in the field adequately provided for. He was in daily attendance upon the king and was the conduit through which royal instructions were relayed to Cromwell.¹¹³ He drafted letters for the king to Shrewsbury, Darcy, Suffolk and Norfolk the army commanders, regarding military action against the rebels,¹¹⁴ and continued his close attendance upon the king until the rebellion was finally crushed with significantly less brutality to the common folk than was usually the case in such uprisings. Many of the common folk saw Cromwell as the cause of all their troubles.¹¹⁵

As always in these circumstances the difficulty was in obtaining coin to pay for what to all appearances was likely to be an expensive military campaign.¹¹⁶ On 26 October 1536 the royal armies totalled about 13,000 men split into four separate armies at Lincoln, Nottingham, and Doncaster, which created many additional supply problems. The rebels were twice and possibly even three times as numerous.¹¹⁷ From 15 October Wriothesley was in constant correspondence with Cromwell in London demanding funds to meet the expenses of the army and on Henry's instructions told Cromwell to send to the treasurer all the money he had.¹¹⁸ When he called on 18 October for 20,000 marks, so perilous was the situation that he directed that 'rather

SP, 1/120, fos. 271-4; A. Fletcher, *Tudor Rebellions* (Harlow, 1983); James, 'Obedience and Dissent in Henrician England'.

¹¹³ Wriothesley personally opened the despatch from Darcy which first showed the extent of the rebellion in Yorkshire. *St. P. of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 468, (*LP*, ix, 905).

¹¹⁴ PRO, SP. 1/108, fo. 60, fo. 172, fos. 191-2, fo. 255; (*LP*, xi, 715, 764-5, 771, 816, 850).

¹¹⁵ *St. P. of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 466-7.

¹¹⁶ There is much correspondence between Wriothesley and Cromwell regarding problems of securing funds to sustain the armies in the north. For example PRO, SP, 1/108, fo. 187, (*LP*, xi, 769).

¹¹⁷ Bush, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, pp. 380-2.

¹¹⁸ *St. P. of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 478-9, (*LP*, xi, 722, 723, 751, 752).

thenne to wante... youe shall goo to the Juelhous in the Tower, and there take as moche plate as you thinke his Grace shall not necessarily occupie, and put it straye to coyning'.¹¹⁹ Money being very hard to come by, Wriothesley told Cromwell that the king 'appeareth much to fear this matter specially if he should want money'. On 21 October, writing from Windsor, Wriothesley told Cromwell that he 'shuld not only doo the King high service to sende him for his helpe, 4 or 500£ with spede', (referring to the treasurer of the army).¹²⁰ The collapse of the Lincolnshire trouble followed by the rising in Yorkshire, moved Wriothesley to write to Cromwell from Windsor that 'this matter hangeth like a fever, one day good another bad'.¹²¹ Wriothesley, at Henry's suggestion, proposed that prisoners taken in the rebellions should receive condign punishment, should be sent to London for interrogation, and closely examined to secure evidence against others who could be implicated, and to identify the shadowy characters on the fringes of the unrest, presumably on the basis that the army was not capable of separating the innocent from the rebels.¹²² Henry Percy, the earl of Northumberland had prior to the start of the rebellion, offered to surrender his lands to Henry in return for a pension and not having carried out his offer by May 1537, on Henry's instructions Wriothesley visited him at his home at Newington Green to demand the lands without further delay.¹²³ The arrangement was not associated with the recently concluded rebellion, as Hoyle demonstrates.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ *St. P. of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 482, (*LP*, xi, 768).

¹²⁰ *St. P. of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 483, 488-9, 490.

¹²¹ *St. P. of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 468. SP. 1/108, fos. 111-12, (*LP*, xi, 723).

¹²² *St. P. of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 490-1. SP. 7/1, no. 44, (*LP*, xi, 842).

¹²³ PRO, SP. 7/1, no. 10, (*LP*, xi, 530).

¹²⁴ PRO, SP. 1/119, fo. 136, (*LP*, xii, (1), 1121), and SP. 1/120, fos. 44, and 233-4, (*LP*, xii, (1), 1176, 1304). See R. W. Hoyle, "Henry Percy, sixth earl of Northumberland, and the fall of the House of Percy, 1527-1537", in G. W. Bernard (ed.), *The Tudor Nobility* (Manchester, 1992). Of peripheral interest see PRO, SP. 7/1, no. 10, (*LP*, xi, 530).

The rebellion gave the French a golden opportunity for causing trouble in Scotland and around Calais. On Henry's express instructions Wriothesley had told Lisle in August 1536 to provision Calais and put it into an adequate state of defence while Henry, in the hope that the war between the emperor and the French would enable him to maintain a neutral stance, instructed Gardiner in France to try to preserve good relations with the French.¹²⁵ The financial anxieties of Henry did not disappear with the suppression of the Pilgrimage of Grace, and in August 1538 there was an urgent request to Cromwell to issue a warrant for money to pay the garrison in Nottingham castle which had been without wages for four months.¹²⁶ In the same year Wriothesley was instructed to investigate and report upon the state of the crown revenues, concluding that the 'tenths' alone would yield 20,000 marks in that year. In the event they actually produced £25,970, whereas in the first year of operation, 1535, the treasurer of the first fruits and tenths received over £46,000 from these two sources.¹²⁷ The northern rebellions provided Wriothesley with his first substantial experience of the financial affairs of the state, an area that was to become his forte during his years as Lord Chancellor.¹²⁸

Patrons and Patronage

Wriothesley's importance in the late 1530s, his proximity to Cromwell and the king himself, increasingly made him the focus for requests for favour and advancement. Patronage involved all strata of society from the most humble to the most mighty. At the apex of the patronage system was the king and he who had gained the favour and

¹²⁵ PRO, SP. 1/240, fo. 40, (*LP*, Addenda, vol. 1, (1), 1091); *LP*, xi, 1317.

¹²⁶ PRO, SP. 7/1, no. 46, (*LP*, xiii, (2), 238).

¹²⁷ W. C. Richardson, *Tudor Chamber Administration* (Baton Rouge, 1952), p. 333, quoting MSS Cotton, Cleop. E iv, fo. 341.

¹²⁸ A full discussion of Wriothesley's work in re-organising Henry's financial problems in the mid 1540s appears in chapter 5.

the ear of the king became the means by which favour was obtained for others. It was an essential feature of life in Tudor England and anyone who hoped for advancement in any field needed the support of someone in a higher place, with influence sufficient to ensure that the first step on the ladder was securely mounted. Promotion thereafter was in part dependent upon efficient service, the continuing favour of the sponsor and the servant's willingness to give total commitment to his sponsor's political or religious inclinations, at least until such time as the sponsored had acquired his own status and position, when he would find that others would seek his support in their turn.¹²⁹

Patronage was also an important element in the redress of grievances; petitioning influential persons and appealing to their consciences was more likely to be productive than making official complaints. Wriothesley's career mirrored this process and even the mightiest in the land sought his help for their suits in his later years. He saw and often drafted secret foreign correspondence, a matter of some importance to English ambassadors. By 1534 there is every indication that most of the council's clerical work was being undertaken by Cromwell's own secretarial staff at the heart of which was Thomas Wriothesley.¹³⁰

To the observant both at home and abroad it was becoming clear that the friendship of Wriothesley should be cultivated. While Wriothesley and Sadler were recognised as Cromwell's brightest up-and-coming young men, increasingly Wriothesley was seen to be the more promising.¹³¹ Amid the pressures of resolving the

¹²⁹ Gardiner is a classic case of one who benefited from patronage exercised by a grateful king in favour of one whose talents would fit him for high office as a trusted servant of his king; when a little over thirty years old he was nominated to the see of Winchester, the richest diocese in England with an annual income of about £4000. See Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 30-2; Muller, *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, App. 1.

¹³⁰ *LP*, iv, (1), 207, 271. Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government*, pp. 309, 311, 360.

¹³¹ Slavin, *Politics and Profit*; *DNB*, vol. xvii; Sadler was two years younger than Wriothesley but joined Cromwell's household while still in his teens.

urgent financial matters, Wriothesley received a constant stream of begging letters from acquaintances as well as from those he did not know, asking for his help. In December 1536 John Tregonwell asked for his assistance in obtaining the nunnery of St. Giles in Hertfordshire, hoping that it would make provision for his old age,¹³² and Robert Forthe in August 1537, wrote to him 'for remembrance sake', no doubt to jog his memory over some request or simply keep his name fresh in Wriothesley's mind.¹³³ An old acquaintance of Wriothesley asked him to intercede with Cromwell, fearful that he had lost the goodwill of Henry's secretary.¹³⁴ Thomas Wyatt, ambassador to the emperor, was at one stage at least, a friend of Wriothesley, certainly so in 1537, and letters passed frequently between them. In November 1537 he reported to Wyatt that 'with much ado about nothing I have saved you a good part of the charges of this post'. In the following February he told him that he would 'shoot so long for you till at the last I will surely hit somewhat, a fat or a lean.' He nearly secured for Wyatt an extra 13s. 4d. a day increase in allowances, and believed that it would come in time.¹³⁵ In return Wriothesley hoped to purchase a small property from Wyatt adjacent to some other property which he already owned in Hampshire. It was all part of the patronage process which oiled the wheels of state and commerce.¹³⁶

The friendship promised by Wriothesley to Thomas Wyatt was important.

Wriothesley saw the most secret of foreign correspondence and as clerk of the signet

¹³² PRO, SP.7/1, no. 63, (LP, xi, 1390-1); Tregonwell in a letter of the same date offered a 'sweetener' of £100 to Cromwell for asking the king to grant the nunnery.

¹³³ PRO, SP. 1/106, fo. 57, (LP, xi, 374).

¹³⁴ John Mille's letter was written in September 1538. PRO, SP. 7/1, no. 5, (LP, xiii, (2), 318).

¹³⁵ LP, xiii, (1), 282.

¹³⁶ Loades, *The Tudor Court*, especially ch. 1, 'Introduction' and ch. 2, 'The Institutions', pp. 1-84. Sadler's comment was 'he that giveth rewardes embaseth a man; he that teketh obligeth himselfe; who is so rewarded is least. Since honour hath lost the value of a reward, men have lost the merit of virtue; and both become mercenary'. Slavin, *Politics and Profit*, p. 178, citing *Sloan MS 1523*, fo. 29a.

he controlled the ciphers. His knowledge of the contents of secret foreign correspondence put him in an influential and powerful position capable of protecting or damaging those whose letters passed through his hands. Wriothesley was in a position where he could disclose or conceal what came from abroad, and use it or not as he chose as Husee told Lisle.¹³⁷ A letter from Cromwell's office to Wyatt written in November 1537 by Wriothesley, demonstrated on the face of it much friendliness and thanked Wyatt for his 'sundry gentle letters' and told him that his actions were well received by the king.¹³⁸ But friendship was not always what it seemed. On 8 April 1538 Cromwell warned Wyatt relative to Wriothesley that 'I never sawe man that had soo many Freendes here leave soo fee perfite freendes behinde him'. Wriothesley's friendship indeed was equivocal.¹³⁹ In October there were suggestions that Wyatt had engaged through an intermediary, in meetings with Cardinal Pole. Those allegations against Wyatt were suppressed in 1538 but revived three years later after Cromwell's execution.¹⁴⁰

The benefits of influence were sought from every quarter. The chapter of Durham Cathedral gave pensions to Cromwell, Wriothesley and Seymour in the hope that they would be able to save the cathedral from the imminent hazards of the monastic dissolution. In the event it was successfully converted to a secular cathedral.¹⁴¹ Sir William Parr, Catherine's brother asked Wriothesley in September

¹³⁷ PRO, SP, 1/116, fo. 103, (LP, xii, (1), 492).

¹³⁸ LP, xii, (2), 1144. BL, *Harleian MS*, 282, fo. 283.

¹³⁹ Merriman, *Life and Letters*, vol. 2, no. 253.

¹⁴⁰ PRO, SP. 1/137, fo. 203, (LP, xiii, (2), 615 (1)). See S. Brigden, "'The Shadow that you know': Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Francis Bryan at Court and in Embassy", *HJ*, 39, 1 (1996), pp. 20-1.

¹⁴¹ R. O'Day and F. Heal (eds.), 'The Durham dean and chapter: old abbey writ large?' in *Continuity and Change: Personnel and Administration of the Church of England, 1500-1642* (Leicester, 1976), p. 127, quoting C. Sturge, *Cuthbert Tunstall* (1938).

1537 what Cromwell was proposing to do with the lands of Sir William Hussey,¹⁴² and in the following May asked for his support about a bill for the commons of Kendal and sent him an 'ambling nag' as a gift.¹⁴³ Thomas Legh, one of several commissioners appointed to oversee the dissolution of the monasteries, suggested that he solicit Cromwell's help to obtain some land that John Dudley was anxious to secure for himself.¹⁴⁴ Other appeals came from the opposite end of the social scale. Giles Geffrey wrote to Thomas Knight¹⁴⁵ some time in 1539 to ask for Wriothesley's help for his parents who had been driven into poverty by their efforts to provide him with a good education and thought that Wriothesley 'whom fame applauds and is in their county very celebrated' might be able to assist him.¹⁴⁶ The widower Stephen Vaughan, Henry's financial expert in Antwerp, asked for Wriothesley's help to find him a new wife with suitable domestic qualities and property of her own. One was found though how far Wriothesley contributed is not known.

John Husee had written from London to his patron Lord Lisle in February 1537, that Wriothesley 'surely doth now stand in such trade that he may do your lordship pleasure more ways than one' and that Lisle should 'make a friend of him; the man standeth in place where he may please or displease'.¹⁴⁷ Eighteen months later however Husee warned Lisle that Wriothesley's promises were to be relied on as much

¹⁴² He was of the Aragonese faction, implicated in the northern rebellion of 1536 and executed for his part in May 1537. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 346.

¹⁴³ PRO, SP. 7/1, nos. 14 and 18, (LP, xii, (2), 657 and Addenda, (2), 1326).

¹⁴⁴ PRO, SP. 7/1, no. 18, (LP, Addenda, vol. 1, (2), 1316), SP. 1/242, fo. 31, (LP, Addenda, vol. 1, (2), 1330).

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Knight was brother in law to Thomas Wriothesley, and was with him in the Low Countries on the occasion of his embassy to the court to seek the hand of the duchess of Milan for Henry. N. Harpsfield, *The Pretended Divorce between Henry the Eighth and Queen Katherine*, ed. N. Pocock, Camden Society, n.s, 21 (1878), p. 278. Knight was also a servant of Cromwell; Merriman, *Life and Letters*, vol. 2, no. 291.

¹⁴⁶ PRO, SP. 1/242, fo. 290, (LP, Addenda, vol. 2, 1434, p. 378).

¹⁴⁷ M. St C. Byrne, *The Lisle Letters*, 6 vols. (London and Chicago, 1981), iv. 378. Husee also advised that 'Wriothesley's clerk must needs have a reward... and he hath deserved it'. PRO, SP. 1/116, fo. 103;

as 'holy water', worthless in other words, reminding him of the conversation that he had with Sadler in the hall at St. Augustine's at Canterbury.¹⁴⁸ But there were a good many persons of high and low estate who thought that Wriothesley's influence would help them to obtain what they sought. Archbishop Lee of York had been trying for some time to persuade Cromwell to authorise the appointment of Robert Sylvester, former prior of Gisborough, as suffragan bishop to assist him with the burdensome administrative responsibilities of his diocese. In 1537 he pressed very hard for some action and complained to Cromwell that the bill to appoint Sylvester had been in 'master Wriothesley's hands by your commandment ever since Easter', but nothing had been done.¹⁴⁹ The plea must have been effective as the former prior had his elevation in 1538.

By 1537 when Wriothesley was busy correcting and supervising papers prepared by other clerks in the signet office, he was described as 'principal clerk of the signet under my lord privy seal'.¹⁵⁰ In that capacity in fact he was in charge of all three branches of Cromwell's clerical staff, the signet office clerks, (of whom Paget was one), the privy seal office clerks and Cromwell's own personal staff.¹⁵¹ By the middle of 1538 Wriothesley's authority was such that he was often consulted directly by king or council, as was Cromwell, and in August he received a letter from the lord mayor of London, passing on a request from a convicted forger Edmund Conyngsby who wished, prior to the carrying out of the sentence of his hanging drawing and quartering, to speak either to Cromwell or Wriothesley. Although the convicted forger had nothing to say to them and had only made his request to delay the execution and

¹⁴⁸ PRO, SP. 1/116, fo. 103. SP. 3, v, fo. 45, (*LP*, v, 241/2); Slavin, *Politics and Profit*, p. 178.

¹⁴⁹ PRO, SP. 1/137, fo. 193, (*LP*, xiii, (2), 599), *LP*, xiii, (2), 1182, (g. 28).

¹⁵⁰ PRO, SP. 1/121, fo. 189, (*LP*, xii, (2), 163).

¹⁵¹ In April 1537 Edmund Clerke, a dependent of Wriothesley and of Micheldever, was appointed to be a clerk to the privy seal, an office he held until 1570. *LP*, xii, (1), 1103 (15) and xiii, (1), 19.

its horrors, Richard Gresham felt compelled to seek the views of the lord privy seal and his secretary before implementing the sentence. It says much for the influence and status of Wriothesley that the mere mention of his name could postpone the course of justice in this manner.¹⁵² Thomas Pope was a suppliant for Richard Rich in June 1538, hoping that Wriothesley would be able to arrange that the abbey of Bisham should be given to Rich,¹⁵³ and in July he wrote to Wriothesley regarding an unhelpful letter from Cromwell, and asked for his advice 'not doubting but that ye be privie thereto'.¹⁵⁴ A further reflection of the extent of Wriothesley's influence can be detected in a warrant given to him by Edward Seymour in November 1539, which was expressed to be 'for the manifold kindness shown to him by his very friend Thomas Wriothesley esquire', and which allowed him to hunt Seymour's deer at Elvetham park.¹⁵⁵

The friendship which Lisle had sought to establish with Wriothesley was employed in March 1539 when he wrote and asked for his intervention to secure payment of a quarter of the £200 annuity to which he was entitled and for which he had been vainly enquiring; 'I am bold to put you to pain, being always ready to requite your gentleness to the best of my power'.¹⁵⁶ Within two months Lisle was in the Tower. Bonner away in Compiègne wrote to Wriothesley in October on behalf of a friend of the Portuguese ambassador in the expectation that he could obtain a licence for this 'friend' to export hawks from Ireland.¹⁵⁷

Lord Sandys, captain at Guisnes despite his disabilities and his age, (he was in his mid-60's), wrote twice to Wriothesley in June 1538, seeking a licence to excuse his

¹⁵² PRO, SP. 1/134, fo. 247, *Lisle Letters*, v, 201/2..

¹⁵³ PRO, SP. 7/1, no. 27, (*LP*, xiii, (1), 1208).

¹⁵⁴ PRO, SP. 7/1, no. 26, (*LP*, xiii, (1), 1488).

¹⁵⁵ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 3, p. 241.

¹⁵⁶ PRO, SP. 1/144, fo. 190, (*LP*, xiv, (1), 626).

¹⁵⁷ PRO, SP. 1/154, fo. 19, (*LP*, xiv, (2), 318).

further presence in France on account of his ill- health.¹⁵⁸ Even Cranmer found it convenient to use Wriothesley as a means of access to Cromwell¹⁵⁹ and another petitioner asked him to assist a defendant from Wexford to ensure that justice was done which he believed would not happen unless 'secretary' Wriothesley could persuade the master of the rolls and the chief justice personally to decide the case, the other party being in a position of such influence that he could otherwise determine the outcome of the dispute.¹⁶⁰

Wriothesley's friendship was uncertain and there was more friction when he wrote to Wyatt in June 1538 complaining of his gambling. Two months later Henry, much displeased with the failure of Francis Bryan's embassy, sent Wriothesley to interrogate him.¹⁶¹ Cromwell had cause to be suspicious because not much later he was to be betrayed by a man who, according to an anonymous verse, 'more hym louyde/ aboue all other', whom he 'trustyd and of his counsell were'. As Susan Brigden has cogently argued, Thomas Wriothesley was the man more likely than any other to fit the description.¹⁶² Wyatt thought that Wriothesley while protesting that he had 'plaid thonest man with you' was only acting in his own interests.¹⁶³ George Blagge likewise had nothing but contempt for Wriothesley, and years later composed a vitriolic epitaph for him.¹⁶⁴ Yet there was nothing inconsistent in disliking someone while at the same time recognising the need to seek and cultivate the connection on grounds of self-interest. As Francis Bryan commented, 'many there be that will do of

¹⁵⁸ PRO, SP. 7/1, nos. 41, 42, (LP, xiii, (1), 298, 1230; xiv, (2), 568).

¹⁵⁹ PRO, SP. 1/135, fo. 120, (LP, xiii, (2), 128).

¹⁶⁰ PRO, CSP, Ireland, vol. 7, p. 74. (LP, xiii, (2), 99).

¹⁶¹ PRO, SP. 1/136, fo. 212, (LP, xiii, (2), 233).

¹⁶² Brigden, 'The Shadow that you know', p. 22. Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government*, vol. 1, p. 191.

¹⁶³ Ibid, p. 7.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 25.

their bonettes to you, that gladly wold se your heades of by the shoulders'.¹⁶⁵

Wriothesley had grown apart from Gardiner since the time that the latter had introduced him into Wolsey's service but that did not prevent the development of a working relationship between Gardiner and his former protégé. In July 1538 Wriothesley met Gardiner on his way back to London after being recalled from France where he had been sent to establish better relations with the French. He was to be replaced by Bonner, a person of whom at that date at least, Gardiner seems to have little good to say.¹⁶⁶ The impression created by Gardiner's entourage was so great that Wriothesley wrote to Cromwell with a description of its magnificence, referring to the 'number of lackeys, I ween above a dozen, a fresh sort of gentleman, in gay apparel of velvet, chains, cloaks turned down with capes of velvet, large; and thereto he hath a good number of yeomen, with sundry of his servants and officers'.¹⁶⁷ There is a touch of malice, perhaps even envy, as well as wittiness in this description of the retinue of the bishop of Winchester. The report may well have been part of the on-going intelligence which Wriothesley supplied to Cromwell who was then doing all that he could to blacken Gardiner's name and reputation in the king's eyes.¹⁶⁸ Wriothesley in part through his family connection by Germaine Gardiner, nephew to bishop Gardiner, was an essential link in that chain of information.¹⁶⁹ There is an extant letter written in December 1535 from Germaine Gardiner to Wriothesley couched in the most friendly

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 7.

¹⁶⁶ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 83.

¹⁶⁷ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 8, 51-2, (LP, xiii, (2), 442).

¹⁶⁸ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 74-90. Redworth discusses at length the circumstances which led to Gardiner's return from France to a disappointed and disgruntled king, and the events which followed that return.

¹⁶⁹ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 83, and pp. 189-206, where the behaviour of Germaine Gardiner is fully considered, with the events which brought about his own ruin and execution and imperilled the life and career of Stephen Gardiner. Jane the wife of Thomas Wriothesley, was the daughter of William Cheney, and Germaine Gardiner the product of an earlier marriage of Jane's mother to a brother of Stephen Gardiner named John. In a letter to Wriothesley in

terms asking after his children and begging for the opportunity of a discussion with him, and expressing his concern that he had not heard from Stephen Gardiner for some time. In 1537 he wrote again chiding gently that while Wriothesley had found opportunity to write to him even when he was fully committed over the Northern Rebellion, he no longer did so.¹⁷⁰ Although 'the contention between my lord [Stephen Gardiner] and my lord privy seal remaynid still', Germaine Gardiner thought there was no reason why Wriothesley and he should feel inhibited by it.¹⁷¹ Wriothesley however did feel inhibited. Bonner, later bishop of London, was also ordered to spy on Gardiner and he did not fail to report unfavourably upon one whose petulant behaviour and suspicious nature irritated so many.¹⁷² They were characteristics which repeatedly caused exasperation and anger, not least to the king, which nine years later brought Gardiner himself and his conservative allies in the council untold problems. Cromwell had long done all he could to find opportunity of denigrating Gardiner in Henry's eyes, reducing his authority and influence and Wriothesley had to play his part in that process.¹⁷³

While the storm clouds were gathering over Cromwell's head during the six months preceding his death, Wriothesley continued to deal with the multifarious duties that he had been handling over the previous years. In early March 1540 Nicholas Wotton thanked him from his post at Dusseldorf for his goodness in arranging for the remission of the first fruits of the archdeaconry of Gloucester, and Christopher Mont sent an important report on the gathering of the Protestants and Melanchthon at

June 1537, Germaine Gardiner subscribed his letter to 'my loving brother Mr. Thomas Wriothesley' and asked that he 'commend me to my sister' [Jane Wriothesley].

¹⁷⁰ PRO, SP. 1/120, fo. 259, (*LP*, xiii, (1), 1209), *LP*, Addenda, vol. 1, (1), 1021. Germaine Gardiner's suspected papal sympathies could only have been damaging to Wriothesley.

¹⁷¹ PRO, SP. 1/120, fo. 97, (*LP*, xii, (1), 1209).

¹⁷² Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 83.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, pp. 81-2.

Schmalkalden, where they were preparing to resist the emperor's threatening noises.

A month later John Alen, Lord Chancellor of Ireland, wrote expressing his regret to Wriothesley that Cromwell seemed to have such a poor opinion of him, and sent an open explanatory letter asking for it to be passed on to the Lord Privy Seal if he thought that this was the best thing to do.¹⁷⁴

Wriothesley was one of the king's nominees (that is, Cromwell's choice) as one of the members of parliament for Hampshire in 1539, though this further aggravated the long-standing antipathy between Cromwell and Gardiner.¹⁷⁵ Gardiner had his own candidates for the seats trusting to see elected 'men [who were] more of his own religious persuasion'.¹⁷⁶ Cromwell however proposed that Wriothesley and John Kingsmill be elected for the shire, though the latter in the end had to find a seat elsewhere.¹⁷⁷ In a letter to Wriothesley in March 1539, Kingsmill, then sheriff, told him that 'truly the more part of the shire was very glad to have you knight of the shire and so they have chosen you, and likewise... they have chosen Mr. Worsley'.¹⁷⁸ He also wrote to Cromwell 'I maruylle natt a lytylle at the grett Intendyd Inderance of the byschopp off Winchester' and wrote to Wriothesley to say 'there was never seen... so many voyces to be theyre knyght off theyre sher as you fyrste and master Worsley to be tother'.¹⁷⁹ Kingsmill was surprised, given Cromwell's position, that the bishop should have gone to such lengths to prevent Cromwell's nominee being elected, but he

¹⁷⁴ Sir John Alen the late chancellor of Ireland was rewarded on his retirement with a pension of £100 a year out of the revenues of the county palatine of Chester from Michaelmas 1550, and given leave to reside in England. HMC, *Salisbury III*, Series 9, (London, 1915), p. 27.

¹⁷⁵ S. E. Lehmberg, *The Later Parliaments of Henry VIII, 1536-1547* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 42-3.

¹⁷⁶ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 91-2.

¹⁷⁷ Lehmberg, *The Later Parliaments*, p. 43.

¹⁷⁸ PRO, SP, 1/144, fo. 169-70, (LP, xiv, (1), 634).

¹⁷⁹ PRO, SP, 1/140, fo. 197, (LP, xiv, (1), 634). Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government*, vol. 1, p. 204.

concluded that it was due to the bishop's or priests' malice.¹⁸⁰ In Kingsmill's opinion the bishop's attitude could have been the result of Wriothesley's having seized the jewels of St. Swithun's shrine or fear that Wriothesley would be the man 'that is like to purge the cankered and rusty hearts from their old superstitions'.¹⁸¹ The reality was that Cromwell and Gardiner had been enemies for some years which showed up clearly enough through Gardiner's reaction to the outcome of the election.¹⁸² In the aftermath of the trial of Anne Boleyn there was a dispute over annuities given out of the revenues of Winchester, and in 1538 as we have seen Cromwell was trying to gather information to use against Gardiner, to show, *inter alia*, his desire for a *rapprochement* with the pope.¹⁸³ Gardiner was unable to prevent the election of Wriothesley and Richard Worsley, and Cromwell assured Henry that 'I and all your dedicated councillors be about to bring all things so to pass that your m[ajest]ye had never more tractable parliament'.¹⁸⁴ Election to Parliament was clearly a career move upwards particularly when the election was promoted by the most powerful man in the kingdom. The association of Kingsmill with Wriothesley and Cromwell elevated him into a position of some importance in Hampshire where he had been a Justice of the Peace since 1537, and sheriff for the county in November 1538 in addition to acting as agent for Wriothesley who was at the same time energetically seeking property there.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ Lehmberg, *The Later Parliaments*, p. 43.

¹⁸¹ PRO, SP. 1/144, fo. 197. (LP, xiv, (2), 634).

¹⁸² G. R. Elton, 'Thomas Cromwell's Decline and Fall', *HJ*, 10 1951, p. 152; Merriman, *Life and Letters*, vol. 2, no. 255 referring to *Add MSS.* 25114, fo. 291; (LP, xiii, (1), 832).

¹⁸³ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 74-77, 81-3, 85-7, 115.

¹⁸⁴ Elton, *Tudor Constitution*, p. 299.

¹⁸⁵ R. H. Fritze, '"A Rare Example of Godlyness amongst Gentlemen"', *The Role of the Kingsmill and Gifford Families in Promoting the Reformation in Hampshire*, in P. Lake and M. Dowling (eds.), *Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth Century England* (Beckenham, 1987), pp. 144-61.

Another indication of Wriothesley's rising importance in his own county was his appointment to the Commission of the Peace in Hampshire in January 1539, and his subsequent appointment for the same county later in the year. He used his position as Cromwell's secretary in April 1539, to deliver an address to a meeting of Hampshire quarter sessions in which he reminded those present of the need for good religious instruction, of the gratitude due to the king for his 'setting forth of God's word', and the importance of doing impartial justice.¹⁸⁶ In the spring of 1539 steps were being taken to restore good relations between Gardiner and Wriothesley, and precisely twelve months later Gardiner dined with Cromwell and superficially they reconciled their differences.¹⁸⁷ The re-establishment of good relations between Wriothesley and Gardiner, who from this date marched in step on matters religious, proved to be longer-lasting than that between Gardiner and Cromwell.

The Downfall of Thomas Cromwell

The background circumstances of Cromwell's fall continue to be something of a mystery. Certain facts leading up to it are clear. There had been signs of a factional struggle with the imprisonment of Lord Lisle and Bishop Sampson in May and June 1540. Sampson was accused of being involved in 'a combination' with Tunstall, Gardiner and other bishops 'to preserve the old religion and the usages and traditions thereof'.¹⁸⁸ Whatever the precipitating factors of Cromwell's fall, the end was speedy

¹⁸⁶ PRO, SP. 1/150, fo. 138, (*LP*, xiv, (1), 775).

¹⁸⁷ *LP*, xv, 429. *Lisle Letters*, vi. no. 1663, p. 58. Relationships strained as a consequence of differing views about religion were not helped when Cromwell replaced Gardiner as chief secretary in mid 1534 though Gardiner's own unruly temperament may have been as much the cause as any other. See Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 59-60. Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, pp. 288-98.

¹⁸⁸ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 117. J. Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, (London, 1721), vol. 1, pt. ii, p. 326

when it came, encouraged by his numerous enemies, not least Gardiner and Norfolk, and his catastrophic error over the Anne of Cleves marriage.

Wriothesley was as close to Cromwell during the years 1530-40 as could be imagined and adopted his policies, interpreted his wishes, undertook such tasks as Cromwell delegated to him and in every way was identified with his master. If his religious views differed from those of Cromwell he kept his opinions to himself, though as we have suggested there are reasons for believing that he was among the reformists of the early 1530s, yet when the disaster of the Cleves marriage undermined Henry's confidence in his chief minister, Wriothesley showed a clear determination not to be sacrificed along with Cromwell.

Henry had been suspicious if not sceptical from an early stage in the Cleves negotiations, and Holbein's portrait which was not flattering beyond what would be expected, can hardly have allayed those suspicions.¹⁸⁹ The marriage took place at the end of January 1540 but according to Henry was not consummated.¹⁹⁰ When he said to Cromwell, 'My lord, if it were not to satisfy the world and my realm, I would not do that I must do this day for none earthly thing', the death-knell for Cromwell's career must have been clear.¹⁹¹ A temporary calm had descended over the court by the date that Cromwell was created earl of Essex, but his eventual ruination was to a significant

¹⁸⁹ *LP*, xiv, (2), 33, in which Wotton describes the portrait as 'a very lively image', but commented critically upon her lack of social graces and that 'I could never hear that she is inclined to the good cheer of this country'. BL, *Vitellius*, B xxi, 186.

¹⁹⁰ G. Burnet, *The Abridgement of the History of the Reformation of the Church of England* (London, 1705), p. 199, where it is stated 'the King... told Cromwell that he had not consummated his marriage, and he believed he should never do it: He suspected she was not a virgin, and she had ill smells about her, so that his Aversion to her was encreased to such a Degree, that he believed that he should never be able to change it'. Richard Hilles was more sceptical: 'Who judging by his fruits, would ever believe him [Henry] to be so chaste a character'? Hilles to Henry Bullinger, *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation*, ed. H. Robinson, Parker Society, (Cambridge, 1846), p. 206.

¹⁹¹ *LP*, xv, 822-3, 850, (11). HMC, *Hatfield*, 1, pp. 14-5; Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, vol. 1, pt. ii, pp. 452-62.

extent advanced by Gardiner. By the end of March 1540 some effort was needed to stave off the growing crisis, but Gardiner who had been at odds with Cromwell for years was astute enough to see his rival's danger. Nonetheless John Wallop reported to Lord Lisle on 31 March that 'yesterday my lord of Wynchester dyned at London with my lord privy seale and were there more than IV houres and opened theyre harts and so concluded... an therbe twewthe or honesty in them not only all be forgotten but also in theyre harts be now perfyite intier frends... and in lyke wyse the sayd Wrysley'.¹⁹² But to reconcile Gardiner and Cromwell required more than a dinner and the reconciliation was more of a fiction than reality. In April Marillac wrote that Cromwell was 'tottering'.¹⁹³

Meantime Norfolk had put his niece Katherine where she could attract Henry's attention while the divorce could still be made possible if (as Wriothesley pointed out), 'she [Anne of Cleves] be yet as good a Mayd for hym as she was when she came to England'.¹⁹⁴ Such a solution however involved putting the Howards back in control at court and Cromwell could not bring himself to do that. The end could not thereafter be long delayed while the joint efforts of Norfolk and Gardiner were deployed against Cromwell and the relief betokened by the earldom of Essex evaporated.¹⁹⁵

By the beginning of May the writing was on the wall. The appointment of Wriothesley as one of the king's joint secretaries the same month may have some significance, perhaps even a gesture by Cromwell to secure the succession while he had the authority to do it. Cromwell commented to Wriothesley, what everyone else had

¹⁹² LP, xv, 429. *Lisle Letters*, vi, p. 58.

¹⁹³ LP, xv, 486; Kaulek, *Correspondence Politique*, p. 175.

¹⁹⁴ LP, xv, 850 (11). Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, I, Records, cxiv, no. 9.

¹⁹⁵ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, pp. 375-80; D. R. Starkey, 'From feud to faction; English politics, c.1450-1550', *HT*, 32 (1982), xi, pp. 16-22; Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 105-29; G. R. Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government* 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1974), vol. 1, pp. 189-230.

detected for weeks, that 'the king liketh not the queen', and was unsympathetically advised to do something to relieve Henry of an unwelcome and wholly unattractive burden, but Cromwell could not or would not offer any solution except to make the obvious comment that 'we should all one day smart for it'. Cromwell did smart for the Cleves affair, but Wriothesley seems to have escaped public criticism, although Marillac the French ambassador considered that he might be in some peril by his close association with Cromwell. Wriothesley was even then distancing himself from Cromwell.

While Cromwell could find no solution to Henry's problem, others would be able and willing to do so. True to his invariable practice, Henry would not speak to Cromwell, and having made up his mind to end his career, put in train the steps which would lead to the block. Henry's decision to sacrifice him was sudden. Gardiner, aristocrats like Norfolk and Suffolk, others of the nobility and orthodox bishops had long tried to unseat him, but Cromwell was still in charge of parliamentary business, had been elevated to an earldom, and in early June was writing letters regarding affairs in the Border country.¹⁹⁶ To his fury Cromwell was arrested in the council chamber on 10 June by the captain of the guard. Norfolk tore the George from his neck and Fitzwilliam seized the Garter. Characteristically Henry required Norfolk, Cromwell's bitterest enemy to do the deed with Fitzwilliam, one of Cromwell's closest colleagues, while Wriothesley and Paget were assigned under a detailed memorandum prepared by Stephen Gardiner, to interrogate Cromwell. Wriothesley's loyalty to the fallen minister was little in evidence, and Cromwell's own pleas to Henry went unanswered. It was Wriothesley who wrote the council's letter to Wallop the day of Cromwell's arrest

¹⁹⁶ PRO, SP. 1/160, fo. 153, (*LP*, xv, 746); Merriman, *Life and Letters*, vol. 2, no. 347.

informing him of Cromwell's treasons. 'So it is that the lord privy seal... hathe not only... wrought clene contrary to this his Graces most godly entent... for the whiche apparent and detestable treasons... he is commytted to the Tower of London'.¹⁹⁷ In the preparatory work for Cromwell's trial, Wriothesley's deposition was unhelpful to his former master, and almost gave the impression that Cromwell had washed his hands of the Cleves affair. Wriothesley's statement, one of very many including evidence by Rich and Paget, prepared to 'prove' the treasonable behaviour of Cromwell, did his former patron few favours.¹⁹⁸

Immediately after Cromwell's arrest, steps were put in hand to dissolve the Cleves marriage, with Wriothesley, Gardiner and Henry himself drawing up the interrogatories to be administered to those who it was thought might be able to provide evidence, however tenuous. The statements were designed to show that the king had not freely consented to the marriage, had not consummated it, and that there was in any case the existing pre-contract between Anne and Francis of Lorraine.¹⁹⁹ The legal justification on that ground was frail, given that it had not seemed an impediment at the time of the marriage in January 1540. The twelve depositions show that all were written to give encouragement to the king's claim that he had been misled into entering into a marriage contract with Anne of Cleves; they were uniformly self-serving documents in which Wriothesley's hand is very clear.²⁰⁰ He had a vested

¹⁹⁷ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 349-50, PRO, SP. 1/160, fo. 181, (LP, xv, 765).

¹⁹⁸ HMC, *Hatfield*, 1, pp. 14-5, 66-7; B. W. Beckingsale, *Thomas Cromwell: Tudor Minister* (London, 1978), p. 110; Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, vol. 1, pp. 462-62.

¹⁹⁹ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 371-5; Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, vol. 1, pp. 452-62 records the depositions of noblemen (and Wriothesley) concerning the king's marriage to 'the Lady Anne of Cleves'.

²⁰⁰ It would be wholly wrong to assume that only Cromwell was at fault over Henry's marriage to Anne of Cleves; Christopher Mont from Frankfurt sent glowing reports, and Cromwell kept Henry informed of them. Henry must take much of the blame himself, though Cromwell ultimately bore it to the block.

interest in pushing forward the Cleves divorce, if only because he was implicated in the policy that brought about the marriage.

It was Wriothesley with Suffolk and Fitzwilliam who went to the queen and explained in detail to her what provision would be made for her future in terms of accommodation, financial support and her new household, provided she consented to a divorce. To those proposals she gave graceful agreement and within days all was incorporated into a notarial instrument to which the three of them put their hands,²⁰¹ while in July 1540 Convocation obligingly passed a sentence of nullity to meet the king's demands.²⁰² Anne was pensioned off to her satisfaction.²⁰³

On 29 July 1540 Henry married Katherine Howard and Cromwell lost his head.²⁰⁴ Of all those who owed so much to the friendship of Cromwell, only Cranmer tried to intercede for him while Wriothesley who had established his position as secretary to the former lord privy seal was ready to discard him 'and throw his benefactor to the wolves at a nod from the king'.²⁰⁵ For his own safety and future, Wriothesley was willing to betray his patron to meet the king's wish to be rid of him. The anonymous poem purporting to be a monologue by Stephen Gardiner contains more than one allusion to Wriothesley; 'the next way I thought was to find one out/ that Cromwell trusted and of his counsell here; As God would have it such one I found/ my secret friend and of old acquaintance'.²⁰⁶ It must have been a relief to Wriothesley to relinquish all his chambers in Cromwell's house at Mortlake.²⁰⁷ It is

²⁰¹ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 643, (*LP*, xv, 850, 925).

²⁰² PRO, SP. 1/161, fo. 217, (*LP*, xv, 247).

²⁰³ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 629, (*LP*, xv, 850, 860-1).

²⁰⁴ PRO, SP. 1/161, fo. 1, (*LP*, xv, 821).

²⁰⁵ H. A. L. Fisher, *History of England, Henry VIII* (1906), p. 434.

²⁰⁶ P. Janelle, 'An unpublished poem on Bishop Gardiner', *BIHR*, 6 (1928-9), p. 22.

²⁰⁷ *LP*, Addenda, vol. 1, (2), 1468, which refers to an inventory mentioning 'maister Wrytheley's chamber'.

however possible, 'even likely that Wriothesley, and Sadler too, bought freedom... by incriminating others', remembering the lesson of renaissance courts, as Wriothesley himself said: 'spare no man whenne the tyme shall com, but be thyne owne ffrende and thyn owne executor'.²⁰⁸ It must surely be significant that barely had Cromwell been executed than the 'great mansion' within the close of Austin Friars in London, formerly belonging to Cromwell was granted to Wriothesley.²⁰⁹ Cromwell's execution left the field open for Wriothesley who became Henry's principal adviser but never with the monopoly of the conduct of the state's affairs that Cromwell had enjoyed.

The authorship of Cromwell's downfall is still a matter of some contention; Scarisbrick is of the opinion that Gardiner and Norfolk engineered Cromwell's fall. 'He was hustled out from below, the victim of a conspiracy waged by Norfolk aided by Gardiner and his fellows'.²¹⁰ They were able to point Henry towards the ineptitude of his minister's policy in late 1539 and from that time Cromwell's days were numbered. Merriman concludes that his failure arose from his long term obsession with an imperial alliance, (a 'great Spanish passion'), or at least an alliance with German states and that policy led him to Cleves for the two-fold alliances, military and matrimonial.²¹¹

To Redworth 'what poisoned the king's mind against Thomas Cromwell was not the contaminating insinuations and downright lies of Stephen Gardiner and the duke of Norfolk, but the state of Henry's marriage, his lust for Katherine Howard and the fact that the Lutheran alliance, the policy for which Cromwell pre-eminently stood, had become a disposable commodity'.²¹² He discharges Gardiner from any part in his

²⁰⁸ PRO, SP. 1/143, fo. 35v, (*LP*, xiv, (1), 247); Brigden, "The Shadow that you Know", p. 22.

²⁰⁹ PRO, Patent Rolls, C.66, 644; *LP*, xv, 942 (113).

²¹⁰ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 378.

²¹¹ Merriman, *Life and Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 231, 236, 244, 247-50.

²¹² Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 118-9.

death despite all the provocation he had suffered at Cromwell's hands.²¹³ He could have added that Cromwell's own political blunders were as responsible as any other cause for this catastrophe.²¹⁴ There can be little doubt that Norfolk and Gardiner had tried to encourage Henry's interest in Katherine Howard and the king's dislike of Anne of Cleves made those efforts easier.²¹⁵ The decision having been taken to destroy Cromwell, close investigation showed that there was abundant evidence that he had set at liberty persons suspected of treason, had drawn up commissions without royal authority, and humiliated the established peerage quite apart from his role in the Cleves affair. Worst of all it could plausibly be claimed that he was himself a 'detestable heretic' who supported what Robert Barnes²¹⁶ preached and compounded his treason by saying that 'if the king did turn, (from this truth) and all his people, I would fight in this field in mine own person, with my sword in my hand against him and all other'. Inevitably it was claimed that there was clear evidence of heresy, and the immediate seizure of Cromwell's papers went a long way to proving many of the allegations levelled against him.²¹⁷ As Susan Brigden has argued, the burnings and hangings, two days after Cromwell's execution, were part of the coup against Cromwell in which Gardiner's role was pivotal.²¹⁸ It is all too easy to see why Wriothesley should have wanted to distance himself from Cromwell; he had for ten years been the secretary of

²¹³ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 378, does not agree; Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 106.

²¹⁴ Merriman, *Life and Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 290-3.

²¹⁵ L. B. Smith, *A Tudor Tragedy: The Life and Times of Catherine Howard* (London, 1961), p. 117; Elton, *Reform and Reformation*, p. 294; Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics*, vol. 1, p. 218.

²¹⁶ Barnes with Thomas Garret and William Jerome was burned at the stake on 30 July, two days after Cromwell's execution. S. Brigden, 'Popular Disturbance and the Fall of Cromwell and the Reformers, 1539-1540', *HJ*, 24, 2 (1981), pp. 257-278, at p. 257. Cromwell and the others were condemned by Act of attainder without trial.

²¹⁷ It was Wriothesley who sent the letter to ambassador Wallop about Cromwell's 'apparent and detestable treasons' and wrote out the copy of his interrogation and confession. PRO, *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 8, (5), pp. 349-50, (*LP*, xv, 765); HMC, *Hatfield*, 1, pp. 14-5; (*LP*, xv, 850, (11)).

²¹⁸ Brigden, 'Popular Disturbance and the Fall of Thomas Cromwell', pp. 267-8

and closely identified with a man who was alleged to be a heretic and a supporter of those who preached disruptive messages both religious and social.²¹⁹

While Norfolk and Gardiner were known as Cromwell's bitterest enemies, it was Cromwell who provided the opportunity on which they capitalised. Most men were careful to follow the star in the ascendant, and Wriothesley, Fitzwilliam, and Russell stood behind Cromwell while he held power, but abandoned him when he lost it. As Ives puts it, 'no minister under threat could expect staff to risk their careers for him'.²²⁰ It required a brave or foolhardy man to support one whose career was in terminal decline; self preservation was the determining consideration and nothing was more likely to assist in that process than the betrayal, willingly or unwillingly, of a former associate. Indeed Wriothesley may have been the only one about whom Cromwell cherished illusions of loyalty; he was mistaken.²²¹ At the end of June a mysterious letter from Bruges sent by Richard Pate, archdeacon of Lincoln and ambassador to Charles expressed relief that the rumours he had heard regarding Wriothesley's trouble had proved false.²²² What that trouble might be we can only speculate; the letter so much corresponds with the time when moves were afoot to destroy Cromwell and bring him to trial, that the implication is that Pate had heard that Wriothesley, by now joint secretary, was at risk of sinking with his master.²²³

From August 1540 onwards the policy maker was the king himself, not any individual member of the privy council, while the privy council suggested, discussed and ultimately responded to the king's decisions. There were to be no more

²¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 257-278.

²²⁰ Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 354.

²²¹ Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics*, vol. 1, p. 192.

²²² PRO, SP. 1/160, fos. 214-5, (LP, xv, 813).

²²³ Slavin, *Politics and Profit*, p. 139, quoting *Proceedings and Ordinances*, vii, pp. 30 and 100-2, notes that Wriothesley was charged with slander against the king and interrogated.

chancellors or lords privy seal with the power and authority that Wolsey and Cromwell had exercised in turn from 1509 to 1540. Henry was now in charge and for the rest of his life, would remain so. He claimed the credit for making his secretaries what they had become; to Petre he said by way of encouraging him not to be downcast when his drafts were altered by the king, 'it is I that made both Cromwell, Wriothesley and Paget good secretaries, and so must I do to thee'.²²⁴ Princes, he said, 'best know their meaning, and there must be time and experience to acquaint' the secretaries 'with their humours before a man can do any acceptable service'. Perhaps however those words simply indicate the king's inflated view of his overall control as there is very limited evidence that he ever found it necessary regularly to check and correct his secretaries' work.

Henry's unpredictability led his servants to exercise great caution in all that was said and done. In the aftermath of the execution of Cromwell there was for a period of some months a feeling of tension in the air, and many wondered what was to come.²²⁵ Some of Wriothesley's associates were hustled to the Tower for short periods and for a time there was a sense of anxiety about the court.²²⁶ It was good and necessary to have friends in high places if it could be arranged. So when Henry in 1543 asked Gardiner in Wriothesley's presence if he harboured any ill-will towards Cranmer, he answered the king that he had 'Wriothesley himself as a witness' and his own 'conscience before God' that he did not, despite Cranmer's own hostility to

²²⁴ *Yelverton MS 162*, printed in C. Read, *Mr. Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1925), vol. 1, pp. 423-443. The story may be apocryphal.

²²⁵ Lord Leonard Grey, an old friend of Cromwell, and others were closely examined and some like Leonard Grey were executed.

²²⁶ *CSP, Spanish*, vi, (1), 308. Chapuys writing to the queen regent records that Ralph Sadler and Thomas Wyatt were taken to the Tower in mid January. Sadler was back in office within nine days. See *LP*, xvi, 461, 469, 470, 474, 506, 523, 534, 611, 641.

Gardiner.²²⁷ That special pleading is hardly likely to have impressed Henry. Gardiner went on to explain that Wriothesley had urged him not to indulge in any actions against Cranmer by way of revenge for past wrongs and 'he desired you [Cranmer] to be held sacred, to whom, he [Gardiner] confessed he owed much'.

Wriothesley had established for himself a reputation for efficiency, had been employed by Henry directly on a variety of state duties and over a period of some years had proved his competence to serve the king as his secretary. In our next chapter we will investigate the manner in which that appointment was made, the impact that Thomas Wriothesley had upon the operation of the government and the degree to which his success in the role of secretary opened the door a few years later to his appointment to the office of Lord Chancellor and elevation to the peerage.

²²⁷ Muller, *Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, p. 325; Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 197. CSP, Spanish, vi, 125, p. 326.

3. Principal Secretary and Ambassador, 1540-44

Introduction

In April 1540 Wriothesley was appointed secretary to the privy council jointly with Ralph Sadler¹ and held that post until his elevation to the office of Lord Chancellor on 3 May, 1544.² At the time of their appointment they were both knighted.³ The joint appointment suggests that as Cromwell's confidential servants it was considered appropriate that Wriothesley and Sadler should continue to operate as joint secretaries the working arrangements that had functioned under Cromwell.⁴ It is doubtful if there was any clear formal separation of duties between the two, though the primacy of Wriothesley cannot be doubted as subsequent events showed.⁵ It is perhaps of significance that neither Sadler nor Wriothesley nor any other secretary thereafter was appointed to the privy chamber.⁶ Wriothesley had been tested over the last five years of Cromwell's life and had not been found wanting in the king's affairs. Slavin offers the interesting theory that Henry had proposed to Cromwell that the secretaryship be divided, so reducing the bureaucratic burden by sharing it and limiting the influence of the incumbent of the office. He goes on to suggest that Henry knew that ultimately Wriothesley and Sadler would end up on opposite sides of the religious

¹ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 623, (*LP*, xv, 437). *DNB* xvii.

² *HRO, Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 3, 220, Letters Patent addressed to the court of Augmentations and Richard Rich and Edward North, chancellor, on 15 September 1540, to pay Thomas Wriothesley a fee of £100.

³ *PRO, SP. 1/164*, fos. 223-32, (*LP*, xvi, 541); *Wriothesley*, i, p. 115.

⁴ *PRO, SP. 1/158*, fos. 153-56; The annual salary was £100 p.a. for each secretary. It was augmented by a share of the profits of the signet office which, for example, in 1541 amounted to about £200 for each of them.

⁵ 'Wriothesley took a major part in the council's activities assuming in fact the lion's share of Cromwellian secretaryship'. D. Starkey, 'The King's Privy Chamber from 1485-1547', unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Cambridge, 1973, p. 334.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 334.

fence; they counterbalanced each other. His evidence however is rather less than convincing.⁷ Elton's view is that Cromwell, seeing the coming crisis, decided to put in office those in whom he had confidence not only to do the work that he did, but to add to the membership of the council those he could trust.⁸

Why the appointments should have been made at that particular time therefore is unclear, but with Cromwell's position increasingly insecure despite his elevation to the earldom of Essex, and superficial signs that he was riding out the discontent, the under-current of uncertainty made it desirable to put experienced staff in post. Nonetheless, the terms of the warrant appointing the secretaries called for their attendance upon Cromwell as Lord Privy Seal and required them to keep him informed of all relevant matters. It detailed the secretaries' duties which included keeping the king's seals, his 'signets', enjoying the use of a furnished chamber in the king's 'house', attending upon the Lord Privy Seal, and sharing the duty of attending upon the 'Low House' (the Commons), and upon the 'High House' (the House of Lords), alternately. The principal secretary was to sit in the upper House 'on one of the woolsacks'.⁹ The warrant also required that a book be kept containing 'all things as shall pass by either of their hands, and the one to be made ever privy to the other's register'.¹⁰ Was this an attempt to maintain a religious as well as a political balance? In addition whenever the Lord Privy Seal was at court the secretaries were to 'accompany him at his table'.¹¹ The sharing of information and attendance upon Cromwell was clearly central to the system of control and supervision. The concluding words of the warrant provided that the secretaries were 'to have, enjoy, and use the

⁷ A. J. Slavin, *Politics and Profit, A Study of Sir Ralph Sadler, 1507-47* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 47-8.

⁸ G. R. Elton, *Reform and Reformation; England, 1509-1558* (London, 1977), p. 290.

⁹ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 673, (LP, xv, 437).

¹⁰ F. M. G. Evans, *The Principal Secretary of State* (1923), pp. 360-1.

¹¹ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 623-4.

place of the Principal Secretary as heretofore have been accustomed' and implies the continuation of the system created by Cromwell.¹²

His death left the responsibility for a whole range of duties in the hands of Wriothesley and Sadler. They were experienced and reliable and there is no sign that the management of the offices they controlled suffered in any way after Cromwell's death. However, the secretariat changed in one respect with his passing. No longer was there any one person with the status, influence and craft to manipulate the decision-making process in a way that he had been able. Henry was not willing to allow any future secretary the latitude to control directly so many spheres of government as he had allowed to Cromwell.¹³ Routine operations continued as before but the difference lay in the fact that Henry alone now directed policy. There are hints in the state papers that suggest that Wriothesley had been identified with the office of secretary as early as September 1538 when Henry described Wriothesley as one of his secretaries.¹⁴ Wriothesley had long been performing much of Henry's secretarial work, albeit without the rewards appropriate to the job, but there was a close relationship with the crown by virtue of his position as Cromwell's mouth-piece. Two letters in early 1539 were addressed by John Godsalue to 'his right worshipfull cousin Mr Wriothesley oon of the Kinge highnes secretaries'.¹⁵

The secretary's responsibilities comprehended all those matters with which the king himself was primarily concerned; matrimonial, diplomatic, military and financial policy was of major importance but many other tasks fell to Wriothesley's lot. In April

¹² D. Kynaston, *The Secretary of State* (Lavenham, 1978), p. 31.

¹³ Bernard however disputes Cromwell's dominant role (the Eltonian assessment): 'Cromwell was no more than Henry's loyal and hard-working servant', 'The King's slave'. G. W. Bernard, 'The Making of Religious Policy, 1533-1546; Henry VIII and the Search for the Middle Way', *HJ*, 41, 2 (1998), p. 340.

¹⁴ *LP*, xiii, (2), 418.

¹⁵ PRO, SP. 1/150, fo. 125, SP. 7/1, 53, (*LP*, xiv, (1), 757).

1541 he received a report on the conflict between Morocco and Portugal,¹⁶ upon the trial of Lord Dacre in the following June,¹⁷ on offences against the Six Articles the next month,¹⁸ and in March 1543 he assisted in an arbitration between contending parishes over a disputed river bridge.¹⁹ He was used by Henry as the conduit of his wrath against Scottish ambassadors in November 1543, the recipient of a plea for reinstatement by Nicholas Udall to the headship of Eton school,²⁰ and at the other end of the diplomatic scale, Wriothesley was engaged in trying to negotiate the marriage of Mary to the duke of Orleans, a complicated and in the event a fruitless task.²¹

The execution of Cromwell had given critics an opportunity to seek redress against his principal secretary Wriothesley, and six months later in January, Chapuys the imperial ambassador reported to the queen regent the arrest of both secretaries.²² Likewise Marillac, the French ambassador in London, wrote to Francis on 25 January and he too reported the arrests and the committal of both secretaries to the Tower, though it looks as though only Sadler was in the Tower for any period of time.²³ He went on to speculate that 'it may be the relics of Cromwell, seeing that the chief secretary Wriothesley, who rose by Cromwell's means, is on the verge of descending more quickly than he came up, for he has already been examined upon some rather ticklish articles'.²⁴ No doubt it was this interrogation that led to Marillac's report to

¹⁶ PRO, SP. 1/165, fos. 132-3, (*LP*, xvi, 757).

¹⁷ PRO, SP. 1/166, fos. 73-4, (*LP*, xvi, 932).

¹⁸ *LP*, xvi, 988, 1055.

¹⁹ *APC*, 1542-47, p. 111.

²⁰ *LP*, xviii, (2), 545.

²¹ PRO, SP. 1/169, fos. 127-45, (*LP*, xvii, 182); *LP*, xvii, 145, 164, 302, and many more.

²² *CSP, Spanish*, vi, (1), 308. The English knew they needed to be wary of the 'clever' Chapuys. D. Hoak, (ed.), *Tudor Political Culture* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 44-49 at p 45.

²³ *CSP, Spanish*, vi, (1), ; See Introduction to *CSP, Spanish* vi, pt 1.

²⁴ J. Kaulek, *Correspondence Politique de Mm Castillon and de Marillac* (Paris, 1885), p. 262, 'j'estime que ce soit les reliques de Cromwell, veu memement que le premier secretarie de ce roy, nommé maistre Voyselay, étant parvenu au lieu ou il est par le moyen dudict Cromwell, est en grand bransle de descendre plus vistement qu'il n'est monté, car it a déjà este interrogué and examiné sur plusieurs articles assez chatouilleux'.

the French king that Wriothesley who had achieved the post of secretary with Cromwell's support might be in peril.²⁵ Whether Marillac's judgement was sound or not, the state papers show that Wriothesley's record of attendances at privy council meetings was very regular as would be expected. In any event Chapuys wrote from London in somewhat similar terms to the dowager queen of Hungary as had Marillac.²⁶ Whatever truth there might have been in the rumours, by February Wriothesley was performing his secretarial duties, even if he had ever been away from them, and Sadler was receiving his salary. Despite the anxieties for both of them in the latter weeks of 1540 and early weeks of 1541 they escaped the threat of permanent disgrace from too close an association with Cromwell and his policies.

Significantly at the start of 1541 Wriothesley was granted the important office of constable of Southampton castle, a strategic fortress within his home county of Hampshire where his property interests were already very extensive. That grant hardly suggests any loss of royal favour.²⁷ Everyone in the king's service realised well enough how essential it was to keep himself clear of any complaint or suspicion of disloyalty and Wriothesley succeeded in his attempt at self-justification as his career during the remainder of Henry's reign demonstrates.²⁸

²⁵ M. St. Clare Byrne, *The Lisle Letters* 6 vols. (London and Chicago, 1981), vi. 169.

²⁶ Chapuys had been imperial ambassador in England from 1529-39 and from July 1540-45, and was not only well versed in the ways of Henry's court but knew everyone important in or about the court.

²⁷ *LP*, xvi, 461, 466, 506, 745 (fo. 35).

²⁸ *PRO*, SP. 1/143, fo. 54.

Principal Secretary

The office of secretary had been re-defined by Thomas Cromwell in his years as Henry's principal adviser, and with his considerable talent for administration, he had gathered into his hands the control of almost every aspect of the political and religious life of the country. Defence of the realm, of the areas beyond the seas, Ireland and the Channel Islands, foreign affairs and intelligence, royal revenues and finance in general, the royal household and control over the various councils established in the borders of the realm, all came within Cromwell's purview. None of his successor secretaries came near exercising the breadth of authority that he wielded during his ten years, and with his death a substitute organisation had to be founded. It materialised as the privy council. In Professor Scarisbrick's phrase, 'Cromwell's fall allowed the Privy Council finally to emerge into the full light of day as an omnicompetent entity'.²⁹ The registers of the privy council were commenced in August 1540 and with the exception of a gap between July 1543 and May 1545, are complete to the present time.

There had been a form of this council in existence since 1538 when Thomas Derby was described as 'clerc of the p[ri]vy counsaile',³⁰ and the extent of its work can be seen by an examination of the state papers, but in broad terms its duties were to encourage commerce, and industry, deal with matters of foreign policy and ensure that laws and regulations were properly observed and to provide a forum to which the aggrieved could appeal for relief. There was little practical difference between what the privy council did after 1540 and what Cromwell had personally controlled as Lord Privy Seal.

²⁹ J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London, 1968), p. 426.

³⁰ E. R. Adair, 'The First Clerk of the Privy Council', *LQR*, vol. 39 (1923), pp. 240-4.

The principal secretary was increasingly seen as the chief administrative officer of the crown and potentially the most powerful and influential person in the kingdom, a status which future secretaries such as Paget also attained in later years. Requests for the support of suits to the king frequently came their way and those bear witness to the authority which the secretaries were perceived to enjoy.³¹ They were the daily link between king and council; there was very little that did not pass through their hands or come to their knowledge in the course of their duties. They had the help of four clerks of the signet who were themselves aided by four assistants, in addition to other secretarial staff employed in the management of the extensive business of the royal household. Within the administrative heart of the court there was a substantial staff which managed the day to day routine of work both for the household and the privy council under the control of the secretaries. They were also responsible for the supervision of clerical staff engaged in the preparation or drafting of documents and papers for the privy council, the secretaries or for the king. Routinely the king would also see the despatches which came from his ambassadors abroad; the records are full of evidence that Henry had seen and commented approvingly, or the reverse, upon their contents.³²

The procedure for the working of the council had been established by Henry with Thomas Cromwell and followed a regular pattern of reporting. On Sunday evenings the king was presented with a list of business to be transacted during the following week, and from that list drew up an agenda. On Fridays the secretary would summarise the week's work and the next day present each item of business for Henry's

³¹ PRO, SP. 1/152, fos. 131, 242, (*LP*, xiv, (1), 1206, 1338); SP. 1/155, fo. 157, (*LP*, xiv, (2), 716), *LP*, xiv, (2), 697, and PRO, SP. 1/158, fo. 6-7, (*LP*, xv, 303).

³² PRO, SP. 1/163, fos. 24-9 and 56-9, (*LP*, xvi, 56, 115) are examples of letters from Henry to Sir John Wallop, one of his ambassadors, stating specifically that he had seen his letters and approved of his doings.

approval, though if an issue arose which seemed to call for immediate attention or was otherwise of great importance, the Lord Chancellor or the secretary was despatched to the king to seek his decision. Henry required his secretaries to submit their draft documents to him with wide margins at the side and an inch wide spacing between the lines, to facilitate corrections which were by no means uncommon.³³ The detailed amendments, for example, to a letter by Henry written in 1545 and addressed to the emperor Charles show his bitter complaints about the emperor's disloyalty and unreliability.³⁴

The need for one of the secretaries to be in constant attendance upon the king made the position incompatible with the concept of ambassadorial work, and no doubt that is why Wriothesley did relatively little in that field. Between July 1540 and May 1544 Wriothesley was despatched on embassy on very few occasions and it is probable that his value to Henry was such that his absence would be inconvenient. Sadler on the other hand found himself after a year or so almost permanently based in Scotland as Henry's ambassador to the Scottish king.³⁵ The balance of the responsibilities which fell to Wriothesley show beyond any doubt that he was the pre-eminent secretary.

From July 1540 Henry was the dominant policy maker in England. The council suggested, discussed and made proposals to the king but in the end the policy it implemented both at home and abroad was the king's. The secretary's attendance upon the meetings of the council was at the heart of his duties, and in the twelve

³³ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 10, pp. 161-65; L. B. Smith, *Henry VIII: The Mask of Royalty* (London, 1971), p. 33; Examples are legion of Henry's personal attention to correspondence and other state papers, from amendments made to a new draft coronation oath to the preliminary documents regarding the treasonable behaviour of the earl of Surrey.

³⁴ PRO. SP. 1/198, fo. 3, (*LP*, xx (1), 146).

³⁵ Slavin, *Politics and Profit*, is a full review of his early years under Cromwell, his promotion to secretary with Wriothesley by Henry and his subsequent career to the end of Henry's reign. He lost his secretaryship in April 1543 to Paget, p. 150.

months after September 1540, the newly appointed Wriothesley attended almost two hundred meetings, a pattern which continued through the three remaining years of his secretaryship.

The duty to open, sort and read the king's correspondence, and involvement in the preparation and despatch of letters from Henry, put the secretary in an influential position. John Gage wrote to him in November 1542 concerning his foreign embassy and said; 'I doute not but you have sufficient knowlege of the sucesse of this journye by our lettres... unto the kinge',³⁶ and Fitzwilliam suggested that his letters were 'to be uttered to the kinge Majestie as ye shall think most convenient'.³⁷ Members of the council regularly sent him letters to show to the king, 'if you think good', in the hope that his support would encourage Henry to look with sympathy upon their requests. Even Cranmer thought it politic to ask Wriothesley to peruse and correct a letter which he wanted Henry to sign.³⁸ Royal servants realised well enough that promotion in the royal service was dependent upon absolute acquiescence to the king's will, and it was neither politic or even safe to challenge the royal view; many had occasion to tremble at the king's wrath, having crossed the boundary from respectful acquiescence to implied dissent.³⁹ It was equally dangerous to make assumptions as to Henry's likely opinion. The king believed himself to be an authority on every subject, and was arrogant and confident to a breath-taking degree. He would not be thwarted and even on his death bed was angry with Anthony Browne when he suggested to Henry that he

³⁶ PRO, SP. 1/174, fos. 52-3, (*LP*, xvii, 1028).

³⁷ PRO, SP. 1/174, fos. 49-50, (*LP*, xvii, 1026).

³⁸ PRO, SP. 1/213, fo. 24, (*LP*, xxi, (1), 92), 1/181, fo. 44, (*LP*, xviii, (2), 45), *LP*, xix, (1), 481; S. R. Gammon, *Statesman and Schemer, William, First Lord Paget, Tudor Minister* (Newton Abbot, 1973), p. 60.

³⁹ Gardiner's reluctance to accede to Henry's request for an exchange of land effectively isolated him from the government and his conservative associates at a critical time in December 1546. J. A. Muller, (ed.), *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner* (London, 1933), nos. 112, 113.

should include Stephen Gardiner among the executors of his will, despite his experience as a royal servant, cleric and ambassador. The reality was that Henry was a multi-talented monarch supremely gifted in many ways, in languages, music, mathematics, and to a lesser degree theology, but he was unpredictable, vindictive, unstable, devious and cruel. His secretaries had to do the best they could to accommodate to all his moods. It was claimed that he hit Thomas Cromwell about the head and swore at him, but it is difficult to imagine that he ever behaved in such a manner with Wriothesley.⁴⁰ There is no hint of any such familiarity in extant documents.

Henry had been persuaded that he had suffered enough of his domineering chief ministers Wolsey and Cromwell, and never again allowed another minister a position of such influence that he could take executive action without the direct authority of the king. The change in the secretariat was well recognised at court and beyond; Richard Hilles wrote to Bullinger bewailing the religious reaction which had followed the execution of Anne Boleyn and Thomas Cromwell. He noted the too-ready willingness of the clergy, including the archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, to provide money for the king 'because the king had delivered them from the yoke and bondage of the Roman pontiff. As though they had ever been, when subject to the Pope, under such a yoke as they now are, when all their property and life itself, are at the king's disposal'.⁴¹ In reality it was out of the frying pan into the fire. Henry was willing to use the reformers when it was convenient to do so to establish the royal Supremacy, and to challenge idle clerics, papal abuses and pilgrimages. However when there was

⁴⁰ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 551n.

⁴¹ *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation* ed. H. Robinson, Parker Society 2 vols. (Cambridge 1856), vol. 1, p. 207.

any hint of an attack upon the form of the mass, then his reaction was swift and vigorous. Henry controlled the lives and destinies of his people, both the mighty and the lowly, and no one could have been in any doubt of that as the evidence demonstrates.

The conservatives, having eliminated Cromwell in July 1540, remarkably left the reformist element of the privy chamber largely undisturbed at the time, and the members continued their discreet advocacy of evangelism. But the religious climate had moved back from the reformist advances under Cromwell more towards the Henrician model of the early 1530's, and according to Richard Pate the general opinion was that by November 1540 Gardiner was as influential as Cromwell had been in his day.⁴² A nephew of conservative Bishop Longland of Lincoln and ambassador to Charles V from April 1540 to the end of the year, Pate wrote to Henry in November 1540 that while he and Wriothesley were doing their best to further the marriage proposals with the duchess of Milan 'others never ceased running hither and thither and especially to Cleves' sabotaging the work that he and the chief secretary were doing to try to negotiate a marriage contract for Henry with her.⁴³ Cromwell had gone but there were others less exposed who were trying to continue the work that he had begun. Even so the religious changes which had occurred were ultimately too much for Pate who deserted the king's service at the end of 1540 and went to Rome where he stayed until Mary ascended the throne. Pate was suspected of being a papist, and had been in trouble in October 1540 over a treasonable letter but had managed to extricate himself. His desertion may have been as much the result of this suspicion as

⁴² PRO, SP. 1/164, fos. 39-40, (*LP*, xvi, 308).

⁴³ PRO, SP. 1/163, fos. 246-7, (*LP*, xvi, 253).

his religious convictions but it inevitably led to his attainder and the seizure of all his goods.⁴⁴

As a means of obtaining and giving information or mis-information, the king's secretary would have regular conversations with foreign ambassadors and it is no surprise that Wriothesley frequently discussed state matters with Chapuys, a man of much experience of England, the court, and the council, and who by 1542 had been the imperial ambassador almost continuously for thirteen years.⁴⁵ Wriothesley was seen by Chapuys as being pro-Imperial and he played an important role in maintaining good relations with Charles which materially assisted Henry over his plans for war in France and Scotland.

Early in 1542 Chapuys thought that the Lord Privy Seal (Fitzwilliam) and Wriothesley 'are the two people who enjoy nowadays most authority and have the most credit and influence with the king'⁴⁶ and in April he reported to Charles V with every appearance of satisfaction, that he had dined with Wriothesley.⁴⁷ But in May 1542 he complained that he could make no progress in discussions with the privy councillors, Fitzwilliam, the bishops of Durham (Tunstall), and Westminster (Thirlby) and Wriothesley and Sadler the joint secretaries. A month later he told the emperor that Wriothesley was 'a gentleman of no less credit and authority' with Henry than Bishop Gardiner and Fitzwilliam, and made the same comment to de Granville at the end of June.⁴⁸ After Fitzwilliam's death, he reported to the emperor that 'secretary Vristley, who as I have often written, is the man who enjoys most credit with the king

⁴⁴ PRO, SP. 1/163, fos. 66-7, (*LP*, xvi, 119), SP. 1/164, fos. 144-7 and 216-7, (*LP*, xvi, 448-9, 535), *LP*, xvi, 140, 1139.

⁴⁵ *CSP, Spanish*, vi, (2), 134, 229, 230, 238, 270, 582.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, vi, (1), 493.

⁴⁷ *LP*, xvii, App. B, 13.

⁴⁸ *CSP, Spanish*, vi, (2), 9, 23, 42, 78.

and almost governs everything here'.⁴⁹ Henry had the greatest confidence in Fitzwilliam and his unexpected death enhanced Wriothesley's status. It is no surprise therefore that Chapuys in early November advised the queen regent that there was no need to pay or even promise pensions to any among the English court, but added the significant exception that 'a gracious present to secretary Vuristley (Wriothesley) would not be amiss. I fancy that a gift of that kind would be well employed, and might be beneficial for the issue of the affair in hand and the emperor's service'.⁵⁰ With Wriothesley, Chapuys coupled the names of Russell, Fitzwilliam and Gardiner as being those whose support ought to be secured,⁵¹ and while the giving and receiving of gifts was commonplace at the time and acceptable as a matter of principle, this particular letter suggests that there was much at stake and something out of the ordinary was needed to guarantee the support of those councillors. At the end of the year Chapuys reported that he had sought information from Wriothesley as to Henry's attitude on a certain matter of business; 'I sent again to secretary Vristley, the deputy who enjoys most credit with the king' to learn of Henry's final decision. It is not surprising that he added for good measure, that Wriothesley 'had almost all the authority and management of affairs, besides enjoying the king's entire confidence'.⁵²

Marillac also knew to whom to refer when he wanted an audience with Henry, and in July 1542 after Wriothesley had obtained the king's agreement he told the ambassador that Henry required them to be at Guildford on Thursday night where lodging was provided, in anticipation of an audience on Friday morning.⁵³ At the end

⁴⁹ Ibid, vi, (2), 23, 167.

⁵⁰ Ibid, vi, (2), 175: *LP*, xvii, 1024.

⁵¹ Ibid, vi, (2), 42.

⁵² Ibid, vi, (2), 186.

⁵³ PRO, SP. 1/171, fo. 151, (*LP*, xvii, 505). 'Guldford Jeudy au soir... que vous pourrez avoir audiem le vendredi au matin'.

of the same year, reporting again to the queen, Chapuys told her that Thirlby was surprised that Wriothesley 'having almost all the authority and management of affairs, besides enjoying the king's entire confidence' should refer an important matter to him for decision when Wriothesley himself could and should have dealt with it.⁵⁴ To Chapuys, Wriothesley was the man with whom he had to negotiate if he was to achieve anything. In March 1543 Wriothesley with Gardiner, now restored to favour and Thirlby, was involved in discussions with Chapuys which were the prelude to the plans for the concerted attack on France scheduled for mid 1544. The same month a heresy hunt developed among the clergy of St. George's Windsor, and the organist there John Marbeck was soon interrogated about Philip Hoby of the privy chamber and the dean of Exeter, Simon Heynes.⁵⁵ Wriothesley's co-operation was secured in this operation by the instigator Stephen Gardiner who was intent on incriminating reformers close to the king if he could.⁵⁶ He had some successes, though Marbeck was spared.

The Katherine Howard Affair

As we have seen in the last chapter, immediately after Cromwell's arrest steps were put in hand to dissolve the Cleves marriage, with Wriothesley playing a prominent role. Yet whereas the first months of his secretaryship were much occupied in rescuing Henry from the chains of that marriage, only a year later Wriothesley had to deal with the crisis generated by the behaviour of the new queen, Katherine Howard. The king had married Katherine Howard on 29 July the day of Cromwell's beheading, as propitious a date as could be devised the Howard family thought no doubt, and

⁵⁴ *LP*, xvii, 1224. *CSP, Spanish*, vi, (2) 85.

⁵⁵ G. Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic: The Life of Stephen Gardiner* (Oxford, 1990), p. 201.

⁵⁶ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 192-4; M. Dowling, *Humanism in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Beckenham, 1986), p. 65. See below p. 164.

shortly after the dissolution of the Cleves marriage.⁵⁷ The duke of Norfolk, with the help of Gardiner, had cynically insinuated that nubile young woman into the household of Anne where the contrast between the two women would not be lost on Henry.

There is no doubt that Katherine had been carefully coached as to what to do and say to fully engage the interest of an ageing and unpredictable king.⁵⁸ Nature was left to do its work and succeeded, but within fourteen more months Wriothesley was once more engaged in resolving yet another of Henry's matrimonial problems.

While Henry's latest domestic adventure pursued its course, the triumph of hope over experience, the work of government proceeded and the meeting proposed with James V was put in train. At the end of June 1541 Henry with Wriothesley and much of his court with the queen in attendance, set out upon his journey to York expecting to meet the Scottish king there.⁵⁹ Six weeks later the king and his enormous entourage of household servants, privy chamber officials and courtiers, with an ambassador or two, and five thousand horses and equipment reached Pontefract. It took a further four weeks to cover the rest of the journey to York where the assembly arrived on 18 September.⁶⁰ It was very much a progress, however much the retinue gave the appearance of an army, a display of monarchical resplendence to those areas through which Henry passed, almost all of which saw their monarch for the first and only time during his reign. James had not arrived at York by 27 September and two

⁵⁷ Katherine had benefited from a royal grant of land at the end of April 1540. PRO, Patent Rolls, C.66, 693, m.28; (LP, xv, 613 (12).

⁵⁸ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 429; L. B. Smith, *A Tudor Tragedy, The Life and Times of Katherine Howard* (London, 1961), p.103. Hilles reported to Bullinger that 'the king very frequently in the daytime, and sometimes at midnight [would] pass over to her [Katherine Howard] on the river Thames in a little boat. The bishop of Winchester also very often provided feastings... for them in his palace [at Southwark]. *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation*, p. 202.

⁵⁹ Kaulek, *Correspondence Politique*, pp. 320, 327, 338.

⁶⁰ Francis Culpeper had accompanied the king northwards and took every opportunity to break into the queen's apartments at almost every stop, with the help of Lady Rochford.

days later Henry left and returned home a great deal more quickly than he had made his way north. It seems likely that Wriothesley drafted the answers given by the privy council to the ambassadors concerning the Scottish king's failure to keep his appointment at York with Henry in September 1541, an affront which Henry found particularly galling, not least because of the enormous cost of this operation and the transport of many thousands of men and equipment.⁶¹

Henry's return to London was clouded by evidence of yet another matrimonial disaster. There had been much in Katherine Howard's past which she had not wished to be brought to the knowledge of the king. The unbelievable folly of her behaviour after her marriage to Henry can only suggest that she was not only wholly disenchanted with Henry, his clumsy ways and irrational moods, but so besotted with the young men around her that she could not keep her hands off them. Rumour was not long in surfacing. John Lascelles, a reformer and an enemy of the Howards went to Cranmer with tales of Katherine Howard's youthful indiscretions. Cranmer delivered to the king the written proofs of misconduct of earlier days, and the hunt was on. Details of Katherine's pre-marital and post-marital behaviour were assembled in a document prepared on information given to Cranmer which he presented to the king on All Soul's Day.⁶² The process which followed the allegations against Anne Boleyn was adopted again in November 1541; witnesses were closely examined and probably threatened with torture. Henry's initial rejection of the allegations in disbelief was soon dispelled when he discussed the matter with Norfolk and Wriothesley. Only then was Henry convinced that his fifth marriage was at an end. Almost immediately

⁶¹ *CSP, Scotland, 1509-1603*, i, pp. 40-1.

⁶² John Dudley bore the letter to the king and apparently knew its contents. D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer, A Life* (New Haven and London, 1996), p. 287; D. M. Loades, *John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, 1504-1553* (Oxford, 1996), p. 48; Kaulek, *Correspondence Politique*, pp. 352-56.

Wriothesley took charge of the interrogation and examination of witnesses (and there were many), and wrote the notes of those examinations, adding a list of names of additional persons who might have more information to offer. In November Wriothesley and Cranmer examined Henry Manox about his relations with Katherine Howard while he was in service to the duchess of Norfolk and Wriothesley later wrote out his statement.⁶³ By 10 November the story of the queen's betrayal of the king was common knowledge and Chapuys wrote to the emperor setting out with reasonable accuracy what he had been able to gather about the queen's perilous situation. On 12 November the council sent a résumé of all the facts to Paget then acting as the king's ambassador in France so that he could officially announce there the queen's treason.⁶⁴

The next day Wriothesley went to Hampton Court to see the queen and called together all the ladies and gentle-women with the queen's servants into the Great Chamber and 'there openly afore them declared certeine offences that she had done in misusing her bodye with certeine persons afore the Kings tyme wherefore he there discharged all her household'.⁶⁵ In December he interrogated the aged duchess of Norfolk hoping to extract from her additional evidence and prepared interrogatories for her and submitted them to Henry for approval before they were administered. They were 'reformed in some part by his Majesty'. Wriothesley was a member of a special commission to try Culpeper and Dereham for treason, and later Sadler passed

⁶³ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt ii, pp. 694, 699, (*LP*, xvi, 1321).

⁶⁴ *LP*, xvi, 1328, 1334. The *LP* contain a comprehensive collection of letters and documents which record in every detail the scandalous behaviour of Katherine Howard both before and during her marriage to Henry, and Wriothesley's contribution to securing evidence was considerable.

⁶⁵ Wriothesley, i, pp. 130-1; *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 691-6. Holinshed, *Chronicle*, iii, p. 822. He also took a complete inventory of the queen's goods. PRO, SP. 1/168, fos. 163-9, (*LP*, xvi, 1467), *LP*, xvi, 1445, 1466, 1469.

on specific directions to his fellow secretary on Henry's orders as to the process for the arraignment of those to be charged.⁶⁶

On 21 December Fitzwilliam and Wriothesley reported to Sadler on the progress of the examination of many individuals including the 'lady of Norfolk'.⁶⁷ One of his peripheral concerns was what to do with a very large sum of money and plate which had been seized from the duchess of Norfolk and other members of the household and family of Katherine Howard, after her arrest and after a search of the home of the dowager duchess.⁶⁸ He found the responsibility for the 5000 marks in cash and £1000 in plate to weigh too heavily upon him and told Sadler that he would sleep more soundly if the king would decide what was to be done with it either by handing it over to some one else, or depositing it with the king at Greenwich.⁶⁹ Wriothesley also had to make provision for the maintenance and upkeep of the home of the dowager duchess at Lambeth while she was under suspicion prior to her trial.⁷⁰ The report on the dowager was but one of a large number of others on the Howard matter written personally by Wriothesley including one upon her 'friends', identifying those who were implicated in her adulteries. The secretary's role was central to the exposure of the queen's worst offences and his hand can be found on many of the documents which appear in the records. The evidence uncovered was incontrovertible, and Katherine was sent to execution on 13 February 1542 with her accomplice Lady Rochford.

By the date of Katherine's execution, Lord William Howard a near relative of Katherine, had been recalled from France where he was an ambassador, and he and his

⁶⁶ PRO, SP. 1/168, fos. 106-7, 161-9, (LP, xvi, 1394, 1424, 1466).

⁶⁷ PRO, SP. 1/168, fos. 170-73.

⁶⁸ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 722, 724, (LP, xvi, 1466, 1467, 1469).

⁶⁹ PRO, SP. 1/168, fos. 163-9, (LP, xvi, 1467).

⁷⁰ LP, xvi, 1441, 1470.

lady were interrogated and with eleven other persons were arraigned and tried for misprision of treason before a commission which again included Wriothesley.⁷¹

William Howard, his wife and daughter were ordered for a short period to be detained in Wriothesley's house until their imprisonment in the Tower; family links with the family of Katherine Howard were sufficient to justify their detention. William Howard and the others charged were convicted and imprisoned with the loss of all their goods, and although the evidence against them was sparse, this was not a factor which weighed heavily in circumstances where the king's reputation was at stake. Howard and his wife Anne were ultimately pardoned in August 1542,⁷² although as early as the previous March, Chapuys was expecting that they would 'soon recover their liberty'.⁷³ Wriothesley's part in concluding the Cleves divorce and in uncovering the facts of the Howard affair both of which touched the king so personally, enhanced his status in the privy council and his importance to Henry.

Problems in Calais and Ireland

The business of Tudor government, and thus the business of Thomas Wriothesley, was not confined to the affairs of the court. (in all senses of the phrase). At the same time that he found himself coping with the aftermath of the fiasco that was the Howard marriage, Wriothesley had to deal with problems on the periphery of the Tudor state, in Calais and in Ireland. In August 1540 he became deeply immersed in discussions about the urgent repairs which were required for the defences of Calais (an issue first raised by lord Sandys in June 1540) and which were still being debated well

⁷¹ PRO, SP. 1/168, fos. 174-6, (*LP*, xvi, 1470-1). It was suggested that he was aware of Katherine Howard's pre-marital escapades and chose to remain silent about them.

⁷² PRO, Patent Rolls, C.66, 715, m.1; *LP*, xvii, 714 (23).

⁷³ *LP*, xvii, 197.

into January 1541, by which date Hertford was in command in the town.⁷⁴ Calais was a running sore and created considerable problems for Henry financially as well as militarily. There had long been persistent rumours of religious dissent there and a royal commission had been appointed to investigate them despite Cromwell's efforts to impede its work.⁷⁵ Its report confirmed the suspicions of many that there was heresy in the town. In his last years Cromwell had given much comfort and support to those reformers who were accused of heresy where he could safely do so, and the efforts that he had made to protect reformers who were active in Calais came back to haunt him in 1540, and had been a factor in his downfall.

The problems raised by the belief that there were traitors in the army in Calais concerned Wriothesley, who wrote at length to Hertford requiring him to search out the existing sects and their affinities and see them punished. In early February 1541 Hertford wrote to the secretary asking whether an 'arrant and rancke' traitor should be tried at Calais, in which event a commission would have to be sent over, or whether he should be returned to England for trial. His preference was for a trial in France as the most convenient way of proceeding.⁷⁶ Harvey, the Calais commissary, was arrested after an enquiry into his mishandling of the stores committed to his care, was returned to England and executed. John Butler also of the commissary department in Calais, was alleged to be a sacramentarian according to letters from Lord Lisle to Wriothesley, and was also returned to England and imprisoned.⁷⁷ There was always a ripple effect in this type of investigation and in January Sadler was put in the Tower and 'Wyatt

⁷⁴ PRO, SP. 1/160, fo. 200, (LP, xv, 795), LP, xv, 984.

⁷⁵ *Lisle Letters*, vi. 40-6.

⁷⁶ HMC, *Salisbury*, I, p. 18.

⁷⁷ PRO, SP. 1/160, fo. 200, (LP, xv, 795), LP, xv, 984: xvi, 248, 315, 532, 562. See also J. G. Nichols, (ed), *Chronicle of Calais in the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII to 1540*, Camden Society, o.s. 35 (1846), p. 180.

arrested in his own house and lodged there also'.⁷⁸ Both were discreet evangelicals and that was enough. Suspicion of treason was the immediate cause of the recall in May 1540 of Arthur Plantagenet, Lord Lisle who was deputy, and his arrest and lodgement in the Tower, though incompetence was the likely cause of many of the problems detected in Calais rather than any treasonable behaviour on his part, such as alleged communication with Reginald Pole.⁷⁹ In February 1541 the secretary was required to investigate Lisle's debts, an issue which may also have precipitated his replacement by Edward Seymour as deputy. In early March 1542 Wriothesley was sent in person by Henry to visit Lisle in the Tower and inform him of his intended release from imprisonment and to deliver to him a ring 'with a rich diamond, for a token from him and to tell him to be of good cheer, for although in that so weighty a matter he would not have done no less to him if he had been his own son, he was sorry that he had been occasioned so far to try his truth'.⁸⁰ The shock of this unexpected release killed Lisle⁸¹ then an old man of about eighty who, as Holinshed tells us, 'took such immoderate joy thereof, that, his heart being oppressed therewith, he died the night following with too much rejoicing'.⁸² One of the immediate consequences of the death of Arthur Plantagenet was the elevation on 12 March of Sir John Dudley as viscount Lisle 'by the right of his mother lady Elizabeth, sister and heir to Sir John Grey, viscount Lisle, who was late wife to Arthur Plantagenet viscount Lisle

⁷⁸ *LP*, xvi, 461. See also K. Muir, *The Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool, 1963); P. Thomson, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and his background* (Stanford, 1964); S. M. Foley, *Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Boston, Mass. 1990); S. Brigden, 'The Shadow that you Know': Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Francis Bryan at Court and in Embassy', *HJ*, 39, 1 (1996); D. Starkey, 'The Court: Castiglione's ideal and the Tudor reality, being a discussion of Sir Thomas Wyatt's "Satire addressed to Sir Francis Bryan"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 45 (1982), pp. 232-9.

⁷⁹ PRO, SP. 1/164, fos. 247-8, (*LP*, xvi, 567); Kaulek, *Correspondence Politique*, p. 184.

⁸⁰ Holinshed, *Chronicle*, iii, p. 824.

⁸¹ *LP*, xv, 697; *Lisle Letters*, vi, 118; Kaulek, *Correspondence Politique*, p. 384.

⁸² Holinshed, *Chronicle*, iii, p. 824. Kaulek, *Correspondence Politique*, pp. 384, 394.

deceased'.⁸³ At the ceremony which implemented that decision, Thomas Wriothesley took a central role, reading the patent to the company assembled in the palace at Whitehall. A new and important phase in the career of John Dudley had opened.

The on-going unrest between France and England around Calais led to many incidents which came near to dragging both countries into war, and Wriothesley was continually engaged in restraining local commanders from allowing small scale hostilities to broaden into open conflict. He wrote to lord Maltravers at Calais about a disputed piece of land between there and Ardres which was likely to provoke worse conflict, and told him very plainly on the king's authority that 'ye shall forbear... to meddle any further with the said passage'. The long-running sore had still not resolved in June 1541.⁸⁴ In January 1540 Hertford demanded before he departed for Calais that a search be carried out in the Treasury, in the Chancery and in the Tower for a treaty made by Edward III and John of France concerning this area. He wished to be able to show the separate French and English areas of influence marked on a plan attached to the treaty. Hertford had written with some irritation to Wriothesley asking that he press Norfolk to urge the king to command that 'the search in the Treasury be not stayed for lack of the three keys' which apparently had to be brought together to permit the opening of the safe in the Tower.⁸⁵ A copy of a treaty between the Black Prince and the Dauphin with a later survey made in July 1483 on Richard III's orders, dealing with the same piece of land was ultimately found and delivered to Hertford.⁸⁶

⁸³ *LP*, xvii, 163.

⁸⁴ *LP*, xvi, 227, 894.

⁸⁵ HMC, *Bath Longleat MSS*, vol. iv, Seymour Papers, 1532-1686, M. Blatcher ed. (London, 1968), pp. 16 and 22; D. L. Potter, 'Diplomacy in the mid 16th century: England and France, 1536-1550', unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Cambridge, 1973, p. 48, a storm in a teacup.

⁸⁶ HMC, *Salisbury 1*, Series 9 (London, 1883), p. 15.

In January 1541 the king wrote to William Howard who had replaced Sir John Wallop as ambassador to France. Wriothesley had added a paragraph of his own saying that Wallop's anticipated arrest was to be 'disguised' and not be noised abroad. Wallop was in peril because of some suspicion of his loyalty, but by the end of March any doubts had been resolved and he with Mason and Wyatt, of whom the king was also mistrustful, were again employed as ambassadors.⁸⁷ There had been an earlier occasion in October 1540 when the king, having been consulted by Wriothesley about one of Wallop's ambassadorial reports, wrote in very angry terms to Wallop, advising him to read his instructions and to understand them fully 'before you shall make thereof any determination or judgement'. It is unclear as to how the ambassador had caused offence, but the letter is sharp in its criticism of him.⁸⁸ Whatever anxieties there were had dissipated by December 1543 when John Wallop was elected to the order of the Garter.⁸⁹ The elder Thomas Wyatt however never wholly escaped from the doubts about his loyalty possibly because of earlier involvement in the indiscretions of Anne Boleyn.⁹⁰

In Ireland meanwhile a serious lack of funds made the army mutinous and in danger of disintegration; 'revenue here will not suffice by half to pay the soldiers' wrote the deputy St. Leger to Wriothesley in September 1540 and in August 1541. Twelve months later a further plea claimed that there was a 'lack of money to pay the retinue and nothing for repairing castles' and that 'affairs are sore hindered by lack of

⁸⁷ PRO, SP/1. 164, fo. 223-32. (*LP*, xvi, 541).

⁸⁸ HMC, 13th Report, *Portland 2*, series 29, pp. 5-6.

⁸⁹ *LP*, xviii, (2), 517; D. M. Loades, *John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, 1504-1553* (Oxford, 1996), p. 36; E. W. Ives, *Anne Boleyn* (Oxford 1986), pp. 97-99.

⁹⁰ *LP*, xviii, (2), 517.

money'.⁹¹ There was not much that Wriothesley could do and even the raising of the forced loan in 1542 did little to help. St. Leger was still registering the same concerns to the council in London in October 1545.⁹² The reality was that there was no money to be had; the demands of the French war had exhausted all that there was and even that had not been sufficient for the king's needs. In March 1541 Henry instructed Wriothesley to prepare a 'Remembrance' to peruse the affairs of Ireland and to chose a day for a debate in the Lords upon the whole problem.⁹³ Matters were not going well there and within two more months the Deputy Leonard Grey, was back in England accused of a whole host of treasonable activities under eighty separate headings and put on trial. The weight of enmity as well as the evidence against him was tolerably clear and he was executed.⁹⁴ The large number of attainted persons listed in the state papers attest to the searching investigations which followed Grey's trial, which in its turn generated an impressive list of religious houses in Ireland which were suppressed or had surrendered.⁹⁵ In January 1542 Henry was proclaimed king of Ireland though this did nothing to reduce it to any sort of order and he continued to find the country the cause of much irritation and great expense.⁹⁶ In July 1542 there were allegations that goods seized from convicted traitors in Ireland had not been fully accounted for and Wriothesley was instructed to investigate those complaints and William Brabazon,

⁹¹ PRO, SP. Ireland, vol. 9, nos. 52, 53, 57, (*LP*, xvi, 42, 43, 79); SP. Ireland, vol. 10, nos. 69, 70. (*LP*, xvii, 665, 688). The difficulties in Ireland had been long standing in 1534 and Henry was much involved in suppressing that year the rebellions engineered by the Fitzgeralds;

S. G. Ellis, 'Henry VIII, Rebellion and the Rule of Law', *HJ*, 24, 3 (1981), pp. 513-531.

⁹² 'The £6,000 which the king sent is almost employed and the soldiers here cannot be fully paid', as he begged for more funds. PRO, SP. Ireland, vol. 12, no. 22, (*LP*, xx, (2), 562).

⁹³ PRO, SP. 1/165, fos. 48-9, (*LP*, xvi, 655).

⁹⁴ On 28 June 1541. Holinshed, *Chronicle*, iii, p. 821.

⁹⁵ PRO, SP. Ireland, vol. 4, fo. 4. (*LP*, xvi, 777).

⁹⁶ *LP*, xvii, 47, 84 (p. 38). Attempts to raise funds in March 1542 were in part justified on the basis that the king had incurred great expense in maintaining order and discipline in Ireland. Holinshed, *Chronicle*, iii, p. 823.

the treasurer, who was said to be implicated.⁹⁷ Though the outcome of these enquiries is obscure, both Calais and Ireland continued to pose problems for Henry through the remaining years of his reign, and for the most part remained unresolved at his death.⁹⁸

War and Finance, 1542-44

The financial difficulties of the last years of Henry's reign, precipitated in large part by the need to finance military operations in France and Scotland, were an overriding preoccupation of Wriothesley in his years as Lord Chancellor and those matters are fully examined in the next chapter. But the financial problems did not suddenly arise in 1544. They had been present for some years and led to Wriothesley being given the task in March 1542 of raising substantial loans from clerics, magnates, merchants, the City of London, and from the king's 'faithful subjects', all to be repaid within two years. The justification was that 'the king has been at great charges in repairing and erecting castles and fortresses here and at Calais and Guines, in making his haven at Dover and in maintaining a great garrison to reduce Ireland'.⁹⁹ The loans were verified by documents stamped with the privy seal, which were issued already stamped to those of the nobility and bishops who were to act as Wriothesley's agents for collection of the loans. They completed the documents as receipts for the money lent and accounted for the cash collected to the king's cofferer, Edmund Peckham. The expectation was that the nobility and the bishops would in one way or another be able to persuade those from whom some obligation was due, to contribute to the crown's financial needs. Forty letters were sent to the bishop of Worcester to be

⁹⁷ PRO, SP. Ireland, vol. 10, no. 67. (*LP*, xvii, 499).

⁹⁸ F. C. Dietz, *English Government Finance, 1485-1558* 2 vols. (Urbana, and New York, 1921-32), pp. 140, 190-1, 203; R. B. Wernham, *Before the Armada, The Growth of English Foreign Policy, 1485-1588* (London, 1966), p. 171, (Calais), and at pp. 133, 201-2, 279, 344, (Ireland).

⁹⁹ PRO, SP. 1/169, fos. 168-71, (*LP*, xvii, 194).

distributed among those who could be pressured into contributing. The whole process lasted for over two months. Wriothesley's efforts and those of the other commissioners were successful to the extent that 'they so handled the matter, that from among the head citizens of London they secured one thousand marks in prest for the king's use. They that laid forth any sum in this wise, had privy seals for the repayment thereof within two years next insuing'.¹⁰⁰ This exercise was Wriothesley's first substantial achievement in fund-raising for Henry.

The serious shortage of ready cash had an impact not only in England. Lord Maltravers and Edward Wotton in France both wrote impatiently to Wriothesley in the middle of November 1540 complaining that delays in issuing patents for funds had resulted in Wotton and thirteen of his servants being without wages since the beginning of October and this had caused Wotton great embarrassment.¹⁰¹ Tardiness in the payment of 'diets' for ambassadors was one which had led to constant complaints throughout the last years of the reign, as much because of the difficulties caused to those deprived as the impact on the performance of their commissions. As usual the problem was in the securing of suitable coin.

In the summer of 1542 plans were afoot for a further military incursion into the border country and in September Henry sent his army north towards Scotland. The Scottish ambassadors had been singularly unhelpful over the release of some English prisoners and Norfolk, Henry's commander, was instructed to send Suffolk on ahead to devastate the borderlands. The rapid advance led to a serious shortage of food for the army and after a few days of looting and burning Suffolk returned to Berwick.

¹⁰⁰ PRO, SP. 1/169, fos. 147-9, 1/169, fo. 172, 1/170, fos. 103-8, 1/171, fo. 5, 1/171, fo. 49, 1/171, fos. 56-7, 1/171, fo. 72, (LP, xvii, 188, 195, 312, 387, 421, 428, 437).

¹⁰¹ Holinshed, *Chronicle*, iii, p. 826.

Writing to Wriothesley from York in September Fitzwilliam expressed his anxiety and 'very anger' that they were 'destitute of provisions and means of feeding' the troops he had under his command.¹⁰² It was to the secretary that everyone turned when problems arose and one letter from Wriothesley replete with irritation noted, 'I and others here labour all we can'.¹⁰³ Anthony Browne who was also in the north of England at the time, protested they were not being adequately provided for though by the end of September the long expected supplies had appeared.¹⁰⁴ Through the whole of his service as secretary and chancellor we see the perennial demands upon Wriothesley for money, more often than not for equipping and provisioning an army. As the army moved beyond York, difficulties increased and Wriothesley continued to be bombarded with complaints of inadequate equipment, provisions and accommodation to which he responded as best he could.¹⁰⁵ While he tried to handle these major logistical problems, Wriothesley on Henry's instructions, ordered Norfolk and Suffolk to find and arrest a former servant of Lord Chancellor Audley, one Tuckfield who was accused of counterfeiting the great seal, and thought to be in the Borders or in Scotland. Henry demanded his arrest and return to London for punishment.¹⁰⁶ An entry in the state papers about October 1543 refers to a Tuckfield, who was probably the man sought; he had been a servant of the Lord Chancellor and was commended for his military prowess in France and on that basis asked for preferment.¹⁰⁷ Whether he obtained it and his ultimate fate is not known.

¹⁰² *LP*, xvii, 809, 821, 828, 856.

¹⁰³ *LP*, xvii, 864.

¹⁰⁴ *LP*, xvii, 867, 921.

¹⁰⁵ *LP*, xvii, 957, 958, 965.

¹⁰⁶ *HMC, Salisbury 1*, Series 9, no. 76; *LP*, xvii, 1006.

¹⁰⁷ *LP*, xviii, (2), 325.

The privations of campaigning proved too much for the ageing Fitzwilliam who died from the plague in Newcastle in the middle of October 1542.¹⁰⁸ Norfolk, then aged 69 years, wrote in October and November to Wriothesley asking to be ordered back to court because of his deteriorating health.¹⁰⁹ Edward Seymour, earl of Hertford (one of Henry's best commanders) was sent to the north from Calais to take charge of that part of the army formerly commanded by Fitzwilliam. At the end of November Norfolk was able to thank Wriothesley 'for getting him discharged from remaining longer here'.¹¹⁰ Supplies were still in short supply and at the end of the same month, Seymour writing from Scotland to Wriothesley complained that there was such an acute shortage of hay and oats for the horses that they were dying daily.¹¹¹ But such deficiencies did not prevent the army putting to flight a Scottish army vastly superior in numbers at Solway Moss on 23 November, leaving many prisoners in English hands. Hertford was not the only one who saw little prospect of credit being earned in the unprofitable northern environment; Ralph Sadler lost his office as joint secretary in April 1543 on the grounds of his prolonged absence in Scotland, and his position in the governmental machine was much inhibited by this step. It is at least possible that his known reformist zeal allied to his close association with Cromwell was the true cause of his loss of office, and was probably engineered by Gardiner then preparing another attack on the heresies he saw about him including those in Canterbury.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ *LP*, xvii, 950. Chapuys in a letter to the emperor commented upon the 'great loss of a wise and prudent personage most devoted' to his service. His death opened the door to Wriothesley's elevation to the earldom of Southampton which had been extinguished by the death of William Fitzwilliam. The secretary was sent to Fitzwilliam's house to collect some packets of papers and other effects.

CSP, Spanish, vi, (2), 162.

¹⁰⁹ *LP*, xvii, 940. Norfolk said 'in his old age the winter here would kill him'.

¹¹⁰ PRO, SP. 1/174, fo. 51, (*LP*, xvii, 1027), *LP*, xviii, 1027.

¹¹¹ *LP*, xvii, 1118.

¹¹² Slavin, *Politics and Profit*, p. 150.

The difficulties faced by Hertford were not confined to financial problems. He thought that his orders were inadequate and that arrangements for the supply of provisions were unsatisfactory, a complaint that brought a testy response from Wriothesley.¹¹³ To be in Scotland was to be isolated from government, and perhaps forgotten, and Hertford with uncharacteristic modesty, pleaded his unsuitability for military command in a letter sent to the council from Newcastle on 29 October, while Lady Hertford bewailed the fact that letters to her husband had gone astray. In early November the secretary sent on to Hertford a collection of letters from Lady Hertford with a strong recommendation that he report more frequently to Henry on all progress and developments in the north.¹¹⁴ In consequence, during November, Hertford wrote reports almost daily, many of them continuing to express his concerns regarding the insufficiency of provisions for men and horses. Stephen Gardiner was blamed not only for the inefficiency of the system for the provision of supplies but worse, dishonesty,¹¹⁵ and Hertford was no doubt much relieved at the end of the month to hear from the secretary that John Dudley, by then Lord Lisle, had been appointed on 8 November to take over command in the north, and to relieve Hertford of his responsibilities.¹¹⁶ The orders for Dudley were prepared in Wriothesley's own hand and administered a rather sharp reprimand for Dudley's complaint that the orders were not specific enough and that the army was inadequately provided for, a suggestion which 'astonished his Majesty'.¹¹⁷ As happened two years later, Wriothesley found himself trying to meet the insatiable demands of the military in circumstances where there was a desperate shortage of money. Dudley was on his way north by 16 November and expected to

¹¹³ *LP*, xvii, 1002.

¹¹⁴ *LP*, xvii, 1006, 1049, 1067; *HMC, Salisbury I*, nos. 82, 85, 88.

¹¹⁵ *LP*, xix, (1), 388, 411; *Hatfield MS* 231, no. 88.

¹¹⁶ *LP*, xvii, 1049.

¹¹⁷ *PRO, SP. 1/174*, fos. 110-18, (*LP*, xvii, 1064).

arrive by the end of the month when Hertford could, as he was told by Wriothesley, depart homeward a few days after Dudley's arrival.¹¹⁸ Perhaps by way of punishment for his impertinence Hertford was ordered by Henry to bring with him on his return a note in writing of all the laws, constitutions and orders operating in the Border country.¹¹⁹ The letter certainly reads like a sharp reproof.

Somewhat later in December 1543 Wriothesley was appointed to a commission with Paulet, St. John, Rich and Richard Southwell, *virtute regie commissionis*, to sell crown lands under extensive powers, 'for the reason that the king is not in such perfect health that he may conveniently attend to the signing of so many bills and he considers a delay of them a hindrance both to his subjects and to his own affairs'.¹²⁰ The need to sell crown lands, much of it obtained by the monastic dissolution, was entirely the consequence of Henry's military plans, the likely cost of which was usually underestimated. Similar commissions to the same councillors were promulgated in mid June 1544 authorising them to sign grants on behalf of the king, because the 'the king is about to pass the seas on his intended voyage into France'. By that time Wriothesley was Lord Chancellor and played a vital role in the, at least partial, resolution of the financial problems of the reign which arose from the lengthy military campaigns of 1544-46.

Henry's Ambassador

If financial management was to become Wriothesley's special area of expertise, his career in the field of diplomacy was of short duration and not crowned with any great

¹¹⁸ *LP*, xvii, 1094.

¹¹⁹ *LP*, xvii, 1094; HMC, *Salisbury*, I, no. No. 87.

¹²⁰ PRO, Patent Rolls, C.66, 736, m.32; C.66, 742, m.2d; C.66, 742, m.3d; *LP*, xix, (1), 278 (4), (1), 812 (77), (1), 812 (87).

success. During Cromwell's years Wriothesley was too important a part of the state's administrative machinery to be often sent abroad, and from April 1540 onwards his place was usually with the king wherever he went.

It is probable that the first ambassadorial role for Wriothesley involved a visit to Brussels in December 1532. In October 1533 he reported to Cromwell from Marseilles, and before he had long been there he wrote complaining that his 'apparel and play sometimes, whereat he is unhappy, have cost him above 500 crowns'. Not surprisingly he asked his master to press for payment of his belated allowances, a perennial complaint of ambassadors. He may then have gone on to Rome on his unsuccessful quest for papal approval of the proposed consecration of John Salcot as bishop of Bangor. Salcot, of whom little good has been written, ultimately obtained the bishopric at the hands of Cranmer in 1534 and was later translated to Salisbury. Salcot was originally Wolsey's nominee and by his intervention had been appointed to the abbacy of Hyde in the Isle of Wight, which soon after the dissolution ended up in Wriothesley's hands.¹²¹

Much later in August 1538, Wriothesley acted with Vaughan and Carne who were resident ambassadors to the queen regent in Flanders with the objective of negotiating a marriage for Henry with Christina of Denmark, duchess of Milan.¹²² These proposals met with little enthusiasm, despite Wriothesley's description of Henry as 'a most gentle gentleman'. No doubt as he was describing the king to a prospective bride, perhaps an element of hyperbole was permissible.¹²³ Christina, less than twenty years old and already widowed at sixteen, wanted some assurance as to her safety; she

¹²¹ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, 5M53; Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 178; Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 322. See p. 236 below.

¹²² CSP, *Spanish*, v, 2.

¹²³ PRO, SP. 7/1, no. 69, (LP, xiii, (1), 194).

well knew the hazards of marriage to Henry of England. The difficulty was that Henry would never marry anyone unless he was persuaded that she was physically attractive. On 29 September 1538 Wriothesley arrived in Calais rather ill after his ride to Dover and the discomfort of the channel crossing, and was still unwell ('ill handled by his enemy') when he wrote to Cromwell from Nieuport two days later.¹²⁴ He made a favourable impression however and Chapuys wrote to the queen regent approvingly of him. Although all the marriage proposals received a chilly response, the king insisted that they be pursued, as they were, but with no better success.

In 1539 there had been three de Guise daughters all of whom were thought to be suitable on the basis of the king's criteria, and all had been inspected by Philip Hoby and their portraits painted by Holbein.¹²⁵ For the best part of two years the negotiation went on until some of the candidates out of exasperation became unavailable. On 1 January 1539, Wriothesley reported from Brussels to Cromwell upon the continuing discussions regarding the suggested marriage of the duchess of Milan who would be a good consort for Henry being a 'goodly personage, of stature higher than either of us, and competently fair, but very well favoured, a little brown'.¹²⁶ On any view she would have been a better prospect for Henry than Anne of Cleves who was the wife chosen a short while later, largely through the efforts of Edward Carne. Another

¹²⁴ *LP*, xii, (2), 880.

¹²⁵ *LP*, xiii, (1), 994. Hoby was instructed to ascertain if Mme. de Longueville would marry Henry, or one of the de Guise daughters as an alternative, and had to obtain a portrait of the duchess of Milan by Holbein. PRO, SP. 1/128, fo. 213, (*LP*, xiii, (1), 203), *LP*, xiii, (1), 380; xii, (2), 1187, 1188. D. Wilson, *Hans Holbein: Portrait of an Unknown Man* (London, 1996), between pp. 182-3, a portrait of the Duchess of Milan.

¹²⁶ PRO, SP. 1/142, fo. 3, *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 8, 143-4, (*LP*, xiv, (1), 6). There was also a problem of affinity within prohibited degrees. See Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, for a full discussion, pp. 369-73.

purpose of this embassy was to sound out the possibility of a marriage between Henry's daughter Mary then aged twenty-two years, and Don Luiz of Portugal.¹²⁷

In the middle of February Wriothesley was still suffering from the complaint of which he had complained earlier. All the evidence suggests that he had been a prey to the same disabling illness throughout his life, though there is no certainty as to its nature.¹²⁸ In his report he told Cromwell that he did not trust either the queen regent or the emperor because of their evasiveness and by the early part of March there were signs of growing hostility from the emperor towards Henry. Wriothesley warned Cromwell of preparations being made perhaps to fight the Turks, but more than likely England; 'England is made but a morsel among the choppers', he said.¹²⁹ Relations worsened when English ships were detained in Flanders and in the growing tension the queen regent refused Wriothesley's request to return to England. She was at length persuaded to lift the embargo on English ships, and on 8 March she agreed to allow some laden English vessels to put to sea.¹³⁰

Wriothesley wrote to Cromwell and reported a proposal that he be exchanged for Chapuys, but that he would have to wait until Chapuys arrived back in Brussels from England before he could leave there. Later in the month Henry and the queen regent agreed that Wriothesley could leave, though Edward Vaughan was to remain behind. There seems more than a hint that she found Wriothesley tiresome and more difficult to handle.¹³¹ Towards the end of March Maioris reported to the queen that

¹²⁷ *LP*, xiii, (2), 622.

¹²⁸ Adams, 'Tudor Minister: Sir Thomas Wriothesley', M.A. Thesis, Manchester University, 1970, p. 21, thought him commonly a prey to quartan fever. For example see *LP*, xiii, (2), 542, 551.

¹²⁹ *LP*, xiv, (1), 433.

¹³⁰ PRO, SP. 1/143, fo. 208, (*LP*, xiv, (1), 405), *LP*, xiv, (1), 470, 516; *CSP, Spanish*, vi, (1), 43.

Wriothesley's letter is a lengthy report on his discussions on many topics canvassed while he was with the court at Brussels.

¹³¹ PRO, SP. 1/144, fos. 31, 40, 146, (*LP*, xiv, (1), 440, 447, 495, 570).

Wriothesley had arrived in Calais on his way home from Flanders.¹³² He was soon home in England, having spent the best part of three months in the Low Countries where very little was achieved, much expense incurred and a great deal of irritation generated. Wriothesley left behind him a sense of outrage in the Low Countries; in December 1538 Henry had turned on the marquis of Exeter, and after a typical Tudor state trial Exeter was executed ostensibly because of his relations with the Poles. From the Netherlands Wriothesley wrote to London that 'folks were very angry with the death of the marquis'.¹³³

Wriothesley was engaged with Gardiner on embassy in October 1539 to try to negotiate a marriage between the princess Mary and Philip, duke of Bavaria, and at the same time to secure a league between Henry and the Elector, Frederick. As we have seen in chapter 1, however, Mary objected to the match on religious grounds.¹³⁴ This Wriothesley reported to Cromwell.¹³⁵ But Gardiner's letter to Paget indicated that the outcome was not successful mainly because the English ambassadors wanted the political arrangements to be concluded before the marriage negotiations were opened and to that the Elector's side would not agree. As usual Henry's political priorities took precedence over everything, including his daughter's matrimonial prospects.¹³⁶

Wriothesley's next ambassadorial duty in March 1542 with the bishops of Durham and Winchester and Norfolk, was an attempt to negotiate a marriage between the princess Mary and the duke of Orleans, which also failed.¹³⁷ About a month later

¹³² *CSP, Spanish*, vi, (1), 51, 137.

¹³³ PRO, SP. 1/142, fo. 224, (*LP*, xiv, (1), 208).

¹³⁴ See above, p. 24, n. 81.

¹³⁵ *LP*, xiv, (2), 697.

¹³⁶ Although Philip left England a disappointed man, he could not be accused of lack of trying; he was back in England in May 1543, again offering his sword to Henry and his hand to Mary. In March 1546 he returned again, but had no greater success than before. He left for the last time with a pension but no bride. See D. M. Loades, *Mary Tudor: A Life* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 128-9.

¹³⁷ PRO, SP. 1/170, fos. 1-19. (*LP*, xvii, 246), SP. 1/169, fo. 95-103, (*LP*, xvii, 143).

with Gardiner and Thirlby he was sent to Brussels to encourage closer and warmer relations with Charles' representatives, but as so frequently happened the discussions collapsed over Henry's refusal to compromise over his repudiation of papal authority. It was with Wriothesley personally that Chapuys frequently had conferences on matters of common concern which included the proposed treaty of alliance against France.¹³⁸ In February 1543 he concluded in Charles' name a treaty with England whose principal ambassadors were Gardiner and Wriothesley.¹³⁹ At the end of the year the same councillors with the assistance of Norfolk, Russell, Hertford, Browne and Paget concluded an offensive treaty with Charles against the French which provided that hostilities against Francis should start by 20 June 1544 at the latest.¹⁴⁰ But discussions did not always go well and in April 1544 Chapuys was complaining of a lack of good faith on the part of Henry which Wriothesley was doing his best to explain (or more likely to explain away) on Henry's instructions. Chapuys' complaint was a common one; Henry was continually trying to play off the two principal continental powers against each other, and his reliability and constancy were so much in doubt that his ambassadors' representations were often suspect, despite their best endeavours to sound sincere and convincing. Chapuys sometimes found Wriothesley difficult if not tiresome; he used 'very many involved words... always so obscurely that I could make nothing more of it'.¹⁴¹ Francis' ambassador in England, Marillac, also found his conversations with Wriothesley no easier or more productive. The available evidence suggests that Wriothesley was a committed imperialist, and distrustful if not hostile to the French. As we have seen the despatches of Chapuys and Van der Delft constantly

¹³⁸ *CSP, Spanish*, vi, (2), 134, 167, 175, 185, 187, 270, 582.

¹³⁹ *PRO, SP. 1/176*, fo. 3, *LP*, xviii, (1), 144.

¹⁴⁰ *LP*, xviii, (2), 526.

¹⁴¹ *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 120/1.

refer to his pro-imperial inclinations, though any comment from Wriothesley himself is elusive. There was much potential for danger from the French who were often active around the coast of southern England and gave encouragement to the Scots to harass England's northern border. While we know nothing of Wriothesley's opinions about his ambassadorial duties, to some it was a kind of exile and to Thomas Wyatt a doubtful honour; 'I shulde wysshe the kynge had sent me to Newgatte when he sent me Embassadeure'.¹⁴²

Wriothesley's experiences as ambassador were probably the least satisfactory from a personal point of view and the least successful aspect of his years in the service of the crown. As secretary his actions were essentially re-active; he showed little overt political ambition, notwithstanding his attachment to the conservatives, and behaved as the archetypal executive officer carrying out the instructions of his king. There can be little doubt that the reputation for competence and reliability which Wriothesley built up in his years as secretary, quite apart from his acknowledged financial expertise, was adequate justification for Henry to elevate him to the office of Lord Chancellor. He was the obvious candidate when the office became available despite his limited legal training. All he had done between 1540 and 1544 demonstrated that he was a steady hand upon the tiller, and that is what Henry would want from his chancellor.

¹⁴² Muir, *Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, p. 202.

4. Lord Chancellor, 1544-47: Judiciary, Government and Administration

Introduction

On 3 May 1544 Thomas Wriothesley reached the pinnacle of a lifetime's work for the crown with his appointment as Lord Chancellor of England, only the third layman to hold that office, previously the preserve of clerics. The principal office in the state was now in the hands of one who had been secretary to Stephen Gardiner, secretary to Thomas Cromwell and secretary to king Henry. The office of chancellor required the holder to preside over meetings of the privy council and the Upper House in Parliament and to represent the king there, to supervise his own Chancery court and the judicial activity of the king's council sitting as the Star Chamber.¹ But his responsibilities extended much further than this. As the principal legal authority he was called upon to advise the king and privy council, he drafted proclamations, had a role to play in the preparation of bills to be presented to Parliament, was a regular conduit of information, or mis-information between the government and foreign ambassadors resident in England and inevitably found himself in one way or another caught up in the factional politics and religious concerns of the times. Wriothesley was further burdened with an important task during his chancellorship: the management of much of the king's financial affairs. In that capacity he was very successful, and deserves higher esteem than has generally been accorded to him. It was in retrospect the most effective part of his three years as chancellor and overshadowed his work in the judiciary, politics and parliament. That is not to say however, that his influence upon the Chancery court was minimal; a recognition of many procedural defects led

¹ P. Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal: The Rise and Fall of Thomas Wolsey* (London, 1990). Gwyn's book includes a full discussion of his part in the development of the Star Chamber: pp. 121, 130, 141.

him to make important changes to court practice. It was however the inherent conflict between the traditional functions of the office and political pressures which brought about Wriothesley's dismissal in early 1547. With all those diverse elements of his office we shall deal in this chapter.

Wriothesley's immediate predecessors in the office supplied a rather mixed picture of its nature and potential. Wolsey had become Henry's Lord Chancellor in 1515, and was only removed in 1529, as a consequence of the king's growing disenchantment with his failure (*inter alia*) to obtain the divorce from Catherine of Aragon that Henry was so desperate to obtain. Wolsey gave much time to judicial matters, despite his many other demanding commitments. His successor Thomas More, a common lawyer who survived in the office a short time only, was dedicated to the judicial functions of his office, though he was politically active in opposition to the king's intended divorce and vigorous in the attack on heresy. He could not stomach the religious changes and the demands placed upon him to submit to the king's jurisdiction over the church. He was followed by Thomas Audley, also a common lawyer of some competence but of minimal political ambition, amenable and flexible. He was a supporter of Cromwell though he survived his execution with little difficulty. Audley like More concentrated largely on the judicial work of his office in contrast to Wriothesley, but neither Audley nor More enjoyed the eminence in the state which Wolsey earned for himself. In the words of Stanford Lehmberg, 'the only Henrician figures carried higher by the revolving wheel of fortune - Wolsey and Cromwell - were dashed to death and disgrace', whereas Audley died peacefully, honoured and

wealthy.² It was less the office than the personality and capacity of the holder which to Henry was important, and which determined the authority and influence of his appointee.

Audley's declining health had begun to show itself in 1544 and he resigned his office on 21 April. The Great Seal was handed to Thomas Wriothesley with the title of 'Lord Keeper during the illness of the Chancellor'.³ Although Wriothesley had no experience as a judge, it was not thought inappropriate that he should take up the office of Lord Chancellor. He took the obligatory oath acknowledging the king's supremacy in the Court of Chancery sitting in Westminster Hall, in much more extended terms than was strictly required, specifically rejecting the Pope and his authority.⁴ Three days later he took possession of the Great Seal and was elevated to the rank of Baron Wriothesley of Titchfield in the county of Hampshire.

His appointment did not apparently create much interest in foreign embassies at the time, nor is there any office record of it as the privy council register which covered the period from 22 July 1543 to 10 May 1545 is missing. Eustace Chapuys writing to the queen of Hungary on 4 May 1544 reported in a rather dismissive way, 'nor is there any event worth recording, save that Milort Wriothesley, to whom eight days ago the keeping of the great seal was entrusted, has been created chancellor of England'.⁵

That perhaps is a little surprising considering his laudatory comments about

² S. E. Lehmberg, 'Sir Thomas Audley: A Soul as black as marble?' in A. J. Slavin (ed.), *Tudor Men and Institutions* (Baton Rouge, 1972), pp. 8, 10. Audley presided over the trials of Thomas More, Anne Boleyn, the marquis of Exeter, Lord Dacre and others.

³ *LP*, xix, (1), 459. *Close Roll 36 Henry VIII*, p. 1, no. 3.

⁴ John, Lord Campbell, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors* 4 vols. (London, 1846), p. 643, quoting the *Close Rolls*, 36, Henry, 8, reports the new lord chancellor as having said (*inter alia*), 'I, Thomas Wriothesley... having now the veil of darkness of the usurped power, authority and jurisdiction of the see and bishop of Rome clearly taken away from mine eyes, do utterly testify and declare in my conscience, that neither the see, nor the bishop of Rome, nor any foreign potentate, hath nor ought to have any jurisdiction, power or authority within this realm neither by God's law, nor by any other just law or means'.

⁵ *CSP, Spanish*, vii, 134.

Wriothesley only two years earlier. Within two years however Wriothesley was being mentioned in much more deferential terms. His appointment as a Knight of the Garter on St. George's Day 1545 added him to a select group of nobles and eminent office holders who were Henry's principal advisers.⁶

Much of Wriothesley's chancellorship was dedicated to financial rather than judicial matters; the need to raise money from whatever source could provide it, to meet the insatiable demands of Henry's wars. The ability to raise money for the king on demand was a certain route to royal favour and Thomas Wriothesley was one of the few able to achieve such results. It is reasonable to assume that his success in the financial field during his secretaryship was one justification for his appointment as Lord Chancellor, and the need to dedicate much of his working life to fiscal matters was a powerful reason for divesting himself of judicial duties to concentrate on the 'king's affairs'. Nonetheless Wriothesley's achievements in the judicial field were not as negligible as is often implied and it is to this issue that we now turn.

Judicial Affairs

Wriothesley had been educated in the law and called to the bar, but had determined at an early stage in his career not to engage in the practice of the law choosing instead to enter the royal service. His legal training however opened the door of opportunity at every stage in his career under Wolsey, Cromwell, as Henry's secretary and as Lord Chancellor.

The minutiae of the work of the civil courts seems to have had little interest for

⁶ R. Holinshed, *Chronicle etc.* (London, 1577), ed. H. Ellis 6 vols. (London, 1809), iii, p. 847.

Wriothesley at any stage of his life and he never appeared as an advocate in any court so far as can be ascertained. It is not surprising that he was ill-equipped to undertake the judicial duties of the first law officer in the realm. The status of the Lord Chancellor in judicial terms had been increasing in importance over the previous fifteen years, aided by the pre-eminence of the Chancery court, the use of which had grown quite dramatically in the first two or three decades of Henry's reign, until it dealt with the majority of land disputes, to the growing irritation of the common lawyers. Wriothesley also presided over the court of Star Chamber. The principal attractiveness to litigants of these courts compared with King's Bench and Common Pleas, was their freedom from the restrictive and archaic form of pleadings required in those courts. Just as important, they used English in their formal documents instead of Latin. Instead of fitting a claim into the fixed formulas of the common law, a litigant in Chancery pleaded his case in English and was able to obtain the court's support in compelling disclosure of documents and the attendance of witnesses by subpoena. The process was more flexible, speedy and much less expensive. In short it was possible in Chancery to remedy the deficiencies and rigidity of the common law procedures and with its invaluable writ of subpoena, there were increasing advantages in using Chancery rather than the common law courts.⁷

Into this developing legal system Wriothesley was introduced in May 1544. The nineteenth-century legal historian Campbell claimed that he proved to be a very incompetent judge, the subject of constant complaints from litigants (whose suits were either delayed or dealt with inadequately), from other judges, and from members of the bar who claimed to have suffered from his lack of judicial experience and his erroneous

⁷ S. J. Gunn, *Early Tudor Government, 1485-1558* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 72-108, provides a useful summary of the various types of court which comprised the Tudor legal system.

decisions.⁸ He attempted, says Campbell, to redress the deficiencies of his knowledge and understanding of the cases, but found the task beyond him. No evidence is offered for the charges and this highly critical assessment of Wriothesley's ability has been challenged by more recent research. Campbell's opinion was not shared by Pollard, who thought that Wriothesley showed competence in his judicial work.⁹ S. J. Gunn describes Wriothesley as a 'gifted lay civil lawyer', which no doubt he was, and suggests that he facilitated the growth of his court 'by personal attention to judicial work and reforms in organisation and procedure', about which there is no dispute.¹⁰ Contemporary evidence is lacking to support the allegations of incompetence, and none is likely to be found. In his monumental work William Holdsworth opines that 'Wriothesley was a member of Gray's Inn, and had made his way at court and not by following the profession of the law' which does not take us any further.¹¹ Litigants' dissatisfaction is hardly likely to have been reduced into writing, though it may have been expressed verbally. The hit or miss operation of the English legal system throughout the period discouraged any but the most determined of petitioners, and the inordinate delays, the scope for influencing decisions by judicious bribes or threats and the still uncertain rules of evidence and problems over the burden of proof, all conspired to make any litigation a lottery.¹²

⁸ Campbell, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, p. 644.

⁹ A. F. Pollard, 'Star Chamber under the Tudors', *EHR*, 37 (1922), p. 533.

¹⁰ Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, p. 78.

¹¹ W. Holdsworth, *A History of English Law*, ed. A. L. Goodhart et al. (London, 1871-1944), vol. v, p. 224, n. 5.

¹² G. R. Elton, *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 311.

Wriothesley and the Courts of Chancery and Star Chamber

Evidence for Wriothesley's practical involvement in judicial matters is limited and scrappy, but enough survives to illustrate the range of his work. Much of what does survive is linked to the issues of royal authority and the management of the king's affairs. Though Wriothesley appeared infrequently in court, compared with More, he carried through several significant improvements in the judicial process, mostly of a procedural nature.¹³ The introduction of the Chancery Entry Books may well have been his innovation, as the first book coincides with Wriothesley's appointment as Lord Chancellor, and shows that he presided in court for the first three months after his appointment.¹⁴ The purpose of the Entry Books was to provide a formal device for recording details of chancery actions, and the chancellor's name appears in some of the recorded decisions. In the case of *Wayland v. Parker*, for example, the complainant promised 'before the Right Honourable Sir Thomas Wriothesley that if judgement... be gyven on his behalf he will not act untyl the said lord shall hear and determyne the said matter accordingly'.¹⁵ The common forms of order were 'it is ordered that' or 'it is ordered by the court that', the clear implication being that Wriothesley personally made the orders. There are other references to the Lord Chancellor's part in dealing with actions. On 21 May 1544 a litigant Elizabeth Platting, was required to 'shew to the lord chancellor the dede whereby estate was granted', and a few days later he adjudicated in the case of *Harrys v. Sutton*.¹⁶ The references to Wriothesley's hearing of complaints continued through June and July, and in the latter month there is a note

¹³ Thomas More personally took part in nearly half the suits which passed through the court during his chancellorship. Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, p. 78.

¹⁴ PRO, C 33, (*Entry Books of Decrees and Orders*). I acknowledge the helpful indicators in C. S. Adams, 'Tudor Minister, Sir Thomas Wriothesley', MA Dissertation, Manchester University, 1973 on this topic.

¹⁵ Ibid, C 33, 1, 132.

¹⁶ Ibid, C 33, 1, 24, 29.

of an action concerning an indenture which 'was herd, rede... by the right honourable Sir Thomas Wriothesley'.¹⁷ There are other entries showing the Lord Chancellor at work, for example, authorising the issue of a subpoena against one Herbert on the application of Goodwin.¹⁸

For his first three months Wriothesley therefore was much engaged in the day-to-day work of the Chancery court, but even after July 1544 he did not wholly isolate himself from all judicial duties and the records show that he was involved in Chancery cases in November 1545 and late 1546.¹⁹ There is also evidence that he sat in the Court of Admiralty with Cranmer and others in 1545 to hear a petition by a resident of Bremen' for redress of spoil at sea'.²⁰ His status as one of the king's chief ministers gave added authority to the office of Lord Chancellor whether he was there in person or was represented by subordinates. In October 1544 with Henry's authority he issued a commission to Robert Southwell, master of the rolls, to John Tregonwell, Master in Chancery, and to John Olyver and Anthony Bellasys, clerks, to hear and determine causes 'in the place of the Lord Chancellor who is occupied in the king's affairs'.²¹ There was nothing novel in such a step. Wolsey had delegated to his subordinate, the master of the rolls, the responsibility of dealing with Chancery cases.²² In an action in late 1544, Wriothesley 'being so occupied about the king's majesty's affairs that conveniently he could not attend the hearing of the said matter... his lordship committed the hearing and examination thereof unto Sir Richard Lyster',²³ and the

¹⁷ Ibid, C 33, 1, 63.

¹⁸ Ibid, C 33, 1, 36.

¹⁹ Ibid, C 33, 2, 6, 103, 123; *LP*, xx, (2), 770, 886, Addenda, 1858.

²⁰ *Select Pleas in the Court of Admiralty*, Selden Society, ed. R. G. Marsden (London, 1892), p. 136.

²¹ PRO, Patent Rolls, C.66, 747, m.1d; *LP*, xix, (2), 527 (24). It is of interest that William Petre was first a clerk in Chancery before being advanced to the office of Master, a post he held until 1541. F. G. Emmison, *Tudor Secretary; Sir William Petre at Court and Home* (London, 1961), p. 41.

²² Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal*, p. 113.

²³ He was the second husband of Mary, Thomas Wriothesley's eldest daughter. See p. 311 below.

chief justice of the common pleas, Sir Edward Montague.²⁴ While for form's sake Wriothesley occasionally took his seat in court, he mostly allowed the commissioners to conduct the causes in Chancery. His decision to delegate much of his judicial duties was to free himself for other work, not through any feeling of inadequacy. Nor is there is any evidence during his career that he was plagued by doubts as to his ability to manage affairs in the judicial field; quite the contrary. He showed even during the periods of strain and stress caused by problems over finance, a striking self confidence in his capacity to resolve them. The chancellor chose, or perhaps was obliged, to serve Henry more through his expertise in the financial than the judicial field, and Henry's pressing affairs of state, financial and foreign, provided the opportunity for him, perhaps with the king's encouragement, to relinquish much of the work associated with the Chancery court.

Yet despite his pre-occupation with other responsibilities, Wriothesley's experience of the operation of the Chancery court showed how necessary was reform of the court procedures and the administrative arrangements of the office, and he was accordingly moved to take decisive action to redress some abuses that had grown up over time. One of the great difficulties of Chancery judges in concluding litigation was the intractable behaviour of the many litigants; without the co-operation of the parties the court could do little to curtail long drawn-out actions. Such an attitude was encouraged by the attorneys and the Six Clerks. The attorneys of the Star Chamber and the Six Clerks had a critical role in the hearing of a Chancery suit. They were expected to read to the court 'all acts, evidences and depositions', and were apt to take an aggressive part in the proceedings on behalf of their respective clients and

²⁴ PRO, *Decree Rolls*, C 78, 3, 3-4.

constantly interrupted during the hearing. Their income was derived from the fees they extracted from litigants based on the time they were engaged, and there was inevitably much resistance to any increase in the number of clerks, even though the work of the Chancery court had multiplied quite dramatically during the early part of the sixteenth century.

Wriothesley's orderly mind expected of advocates and the Six Clerks more discipline than had hitherto been demanded, and he issued an order restraining the unseemly behaviour which much inhibited the judicial process.²⁵ He assigned additional responsibility to the Chancery clerks and allocated certain days for hearings and others for the passing of orders, and issued an order for the regulation of business in Chancery by the promulgation of nine new rules.²⁶ Procedural reform expedited the process of litigation, made the work of judges easier, reduced delays and gave greater confidence to litigants that their cases were being dealt with properly. One of the reforms in May 1545 provided that 'no ordinarye processe to passe to the seale... but the same be first perused and plyed (folded) by some one of the Maisters of Chauncery', thus ensuring that any orders were first verified and approved by one of the officers of the court before sealing.²⁷

The creation of the formal privy council in 1540 permitted its final separation from the court of Star Chamber which had its own law clerk, though there was little difference in personnel between the two bodies, except that judges and former

²⁵ M. Birks, *Gentlemen of the Law* (London, 1960), p. 94. At the time the right to represent litigants was restricted to the Six Clerks, who were assigned by rota to represent those whose actions came before the court. The whole process remains somewhat obscure. See also I. S. Leadam, (ed.), *Select Cases in the Court of Requests, 1497-1569*, Selden Society (London, 1898).

²⁶ *LP*, xx, (1), 688.

²⁷ G. W. Sanders, *Orders of the High Court of Chancery* (1845), 1, i, pp. 8-9.

councillors habitually sat in the Star Chamber, certainly through Henry's reign.²⁸ It is arguable that the complete separation of functions was only made possible by the execution of Cromwell, though it must not be supposed that the court did not function until 1540; Elton has shown that civil suits were being dealt with by a court of that name about 1521.²⁹

The court of Star Chamber dealt with both private and public cases, and its clerk operated the administration of the Chamber under the direction of the Lord Chancellor. Throughout Wriothesley's chancellorship, Thomas Eden was the clerk, holding the office until 1567. Private suits were started by filing a bill of complaint, while official prosecutions were commenced by the attorney-general. The range of legal business handled by the court was wide. Riot, forcible entry, assault, and trespass to chattels formed one category, and the others involved allegations of perversion of justice, perjury, abuse of legal procedure, dispossession of land, allegations of corruption or extortion, municipal and trade disputes,³⁰ and finally all those remaining cases which demanded the attention of the Star Chamber jurisdiction which could not be brought under the other categories. By the time of Elizabeth the court was

²⁸ J. A. Guy, *The Court of Star Chamber and its Records to the reign of Elizabeth I*, PRO Handbooks 21 (London, 1985), pp. 7-8. The men who were Henry's close advisers, taking decisions and counter-signing warrants for the Great Seal were also the most active members in Star Chamber. p. 4. For example Cranmer sat with Wriothesley on occasion. *Select Cases in Star Chamber*, Selden Society, ed. I. S. Leadam, 2 vols. (London, 1910), ii, p. 277. See also G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitution* 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 164-5.

²⁹ G. R. Elton, *Reform and Renewal; Thomas Cromwell and the Common Weal* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 141-2; *Reform and Reformation; England 1509-1558* (London, 1977), pp. 59-63; *Studies in Tudor Politics and Government; Papers and Reviews, Tudor Politics/Tudor Government* vol. 1. (Cambridge, 1974), p. 322; *Policy and Police; The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge, 1972), for a general view of actions in Star Chamber, pp. 310-14, 325, 338, 354-5, 358, 369.

³⁰ Wriothesley as chancellor presided in 1544 over a case (*Smythe v. Dankerd*), involving deception over the sale of butter, in company with Cranmer, Norfolk, Suffolk, John Russell and Edward Seymour. *Select Cases in Star Chamber*, Selden Society, ed. I. S. Leadam, 2 vols. (London, 1910), ii, p. 277.

principally concerned with criminal cases.³¹ Its power to punish was limited however; it could fine or imprison malfeasors but it could not hang a murderer or a thief. Not surprisingly the volume of business that the court attracted was very large, so large indeed that it was in danger of being overwhelmed by its own success, and some of its work had to be diverted to other courts. Wriothesley during his years as chancellor sat in Star Chamber dealing with cases mostly of a criminal nature, though the loss of the registers compels reliance on other sources for the evidence.

Charles Wriothesley recorded a number of cases which his cousin the Lord Chancellor dealt with in Star Chamber. In February 1545 Thomas Wriothesley ordered a Kentish priest to do penance at Paul's Cross for counterfeiting a miracle and for fraudulently suggesting that it was truly the blood of Christ that had dropped on the communion cloth and altar at the time of consecration, whereas it came from a cut made to his own finger.³² Five days later the Lord Chancellor ordered another priest to be punished by being branded on both cheeks with the letters 'F' and 'A' in addition to serving time in the pillory, for falsely accusing a gentleman from the West Country, though in what respect is not reported.³³

At the end of September 1546 Wriothesley wrote a fulsome letter to the Mayor and Aldermen of Chester thanking them for their diligence in tracking down and sending to London, one Lawrence Houghton, required for questioning by the council.³⁴ As is so often the case there is no further information in the state papers as to why the arrested man was to be interrogated, but the letter demonstrates the

³¹ Guy, *Star Chamber*, pp. 52-5.

³² Wriothesley, i, p. 152; see P. Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), p. 74; J. G. Nicholls (ed.), *Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London*, Camden Society o.s. 53, (1851), p. 48.

³³ Wriothesley, i, p. 153; Nicholls, *Greyfriars Chronicle*, p. 48-9; Holinshed, *Chronicle*, iii, p. 846, 'a notable example of justice', in the words of the chronicler.

³⁴ HMC, *8th Report*, p. 373b.

importance of the local keepers of the peace in acting as the privy council's policemen in providing a link between the remoter parts of the kingdom and the council through the office of the Lord Chancellor. All these cases show the wide range of matters in which Wriothesley adjudicated.

In September 1546 Wriothesley wrote to Paget asking whether Henry would want three thieves, two of whom had already been branded on the thumb, to be hanged as an example to others. He knew that Paget's influence with the king was by that date at least as great as his own, and he was anxious to do what the king would have wished.³⁵ What reply, if any, the Lord Chancellor received is not known. Wriothesley as we shall see in a later chapter, had been badly mauled by Henry at least twice in the previous few months and was probably anxious not to repeat the experience. A short while later in November he ordered one Robert Silvester, a Northamptonshire yeoman to be set in the pillory at Cheape, to be burned on the cheek with the letter 'P', and to have an ear cut off for misusing the king's commission and 'pillaging' the king's subjects.³⁶ It is not unlikely that Wriothesley had a hand a few weeks later in ordering six members of the gentry to be put in the same pillory 'for willfull perjurye and other develishe abhominations' including larceny and arson. In addition they were each to be burned in the left cheek with the letter 'P', with the loss also of the right ear, and committed to prison and ordered to pay huge fines of £1,000 in one case, and smaller sums in the others.³⁷ Sometime towards the end of 1546 the Lord Chancellor sent two of the king's receivers to the Marshalsea for having misappropriated money which

³⁵ PRO, SP. 1/224, fo. 105, (LP, xxi, (2), 60). Branding indicated a previous conviction in respect of which benefit of clergy had been claimed and allowed. C. B. Herrup, *The Common Peace: Participation and the Criminal Law in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 48.

³⁶ Wriothesley, i, pp. 149-50.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 150. These matters are also mentioned in the *Chronicle of the Greyfriars of London*, pp. 47-8

should have been paid into the king's treasury.³⁸ Two years earlier in September 1544 the chancellor arraigned some 'Egiptians' who had been charged and convicted of robbery. He ordered them to be 'whipped like vagabonds' if they were English and despatched to their home countries, or to be 'conveyed out of the realm' if they were foreigners.³⁹

Wriothesley and the Reform of Augmentations

There were also under discussion in late 1546, plans to re-organise the court of Augmentations, and to consolidate it with other courts, and Wriothesley was a party to the proposals designed to maximise the substantial income generated by that court's activities.⁴⁰ While he was very enthusiastic about any proposals for administrative or judicial reform, this enthusiasm waned if it became apparent that they might threaten his position or status as Lord Chancellor, or imperil the benefits which he derived from his office. The Court of Augmentations had been created as a vehicle to control the administrative and jurisdictional authority over all recently acquired monastic lands and other property. The exploitation of that land and the other assets secured was another function of the court; as estate office, pension provider, treasury and court of law. Its functions were wide ranging, its staff large and growing with the years. The original act which brought Augmentations into existence did not precisely define its judicial duties but by implication it was given power to bring litigants before it, and for the chancellor as its principal officer to determine disputes relative to land. The first few

³⁸ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 850.

³⁹ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 767. (*LP*, xix, (2), 207).

⁴⁰ A. J. Slavin, 'Lord Chancellor Wriothesley and Reform of Augmentations: New Light on an Old Court', in *Tudor Men and Institutions* (Baton Rouge, 1972), pp. 49-69. J. A. Muller, (ed.), *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner* (Cambridge, 1933), p. 393.

years saw a rapid increase in the money that passed through the hands of the officers, and inevitably its influence increased.⁴¹

A preliminary step had been taken at the end of 1545 with the appointment of a royal commission under the direction of Ralph Sadler and Richard Rich to investigate the status of the various financial courts. Initially this had the support of Wriothesley, who with Paget had for the previous two or three years been grappling with the arcane processes of financial organisation.⁴² Rich had been appointed in 1536 as the first chancellor of the court of Augmentations, an office he held until April 1544, and had relinquished his office of solicitor general to give his full attention to the work of the new court.

A second commission was set up during 1546 with Wriothesley, Paulet, Gardiner, Petre and Paget as its members and led to a recommendation to dissolve the two courts of Augmentations and General Surveyors.⁴³ Wriothesley and Paget had been exact contemporaries in their early days both at St. Paul's School, and at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and also as members of Gardiner's household, and worked well with the other members of the commission, all of whom were on good personal terms. The commission was able to call upon the expert assistance of Walter Mildmay, (who with his fiscal skills, effectively managed the committee), and continued the work of the earlier commission headed by Sadler and Richard Rich.⁴⁴ Surprisingly, they were not

⁴¹ Total net revenues were £71,616 for the years 1536-38 rising to £405, 738 for the years 1544-47, according to W. C. Richardson, *History of the Court of Augmentations 1536-54* (Baton Rouge 1961), p. 77n. But see P. A. Cunich, 'The administration and alienation of ex-monastic lands by the crown, 1536-47', (Cambridge, Ph.D., 1990), p. 48, where the comparable figures are £165,311 and £466,896.

⁴² Cunich, 'The administration and alienation of ex-monastic lands', p. 46.

⁴³ PRO, Patent Rolls, C.66, 792, m. 31; *LP*, xxi, (1), 1166 (71). Walter Mildmay was 'appointed to attend upon them'.

⁴⁴ PRO, Patent Rolls, C.66, 780, m. 32; *LP*, xx (2), 1068 (28); See Richardson, *History of the Court of Augmentations*, pp. 111-60, for a full discussion of the court, its re-organisation, and the part played in its development by Ralph Sadler, Richard Rich, and others. Also S. E. Lehmberg, *The Later Parliaments of Henry VIII, 1536-1547* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 235.

involved in the second enquiry, perhaps because Sadler was by now deeply immersed in Scottish affairs. The immediate circumstance which brought this second commission into existence was the absence in France of the duke of Norfolk, the Lord Treasurer, as general in charge of the English army.⁴⁵ It was perhaps a happy chance that this made it possible to appoint a commission with special expertise in financial matters.

Wriothesley's concern was that his Chancery court might be dragged into a reformed revenue court, and his influence and fees, and the status of the officers of the chancery court inevitably diminished as a result. His apprehension that the commission might recommend action which would operate against the interests of the Chancery court, led him to write to William Paget in October 1546 about the proposal, 'whereby the estimacion of the Courte of the Chauncery and of the Greate Seale of England, shall therby somoche decay (and) a nombre of honest men shalbe utterly undon by the same'. Justice would suffer, he said, begging Paget to urge the king 'to preserve the cours of his most auncient Courte and Seale, with the poore estimacion and livinges of his ministres'. His letter was very much a *cri de coeur*. It would be a cause for great sorrow to him if Paget failed him in this request and would also bring in its train a substantial loss of revenue.⁴⁶ The potential of any proposals to diminish seriously the authority of his office caused Wriothesley to fight desperately to preserve without alteration the independence of his court. In this he was at the time successful, though perhaps more because of Henry's rapidly deteriorating health than his own persuasions, and the king's death in January 1547 prevented any proposals being implemented.

⁴⁵ Wriothesley seems to have substituted for Norfolk when he was absent from court. PRO, SP, 1/189, fos. 62-4, (LP, xix, (1), 768).

⁴⁶ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol.1, pt. ii, 882. (LP, xxi, (2), 273).

The original Court of Augmentations was dissolved on 1 January 1547 before all the proposals could be brought to fruition. In the end some remodelling of the revenue courts was achieved under an act passed in Edward's reign, but in the meantime very little progress was made and there is no evidence that it brought in its train the sort of damage that Wriothesley had expected, probably because of competing interests and patronage pressures.⁴⁷ Wriothesley's hostility to the radical proposals of the commission, judged by the later criticism of him by the common law judges and serjeants, played but a small part in his dismissal from office in March 1547.⁴⁸ It was primarily his total opposition to Somerset's plans, bound up as they were with the control of the council and religion, and the undermining of his position on the council by the reduction in the number of conservative members on it, that made unlikely his continued tenure of the office of Lord Chancellor.⁴⁹

Given his resistance to reform and his decision to divest himself of day-to-day involvement in most judicial work, it is no surprise that some historians have assumed that Wriothesley was neither competent nor confident in his ability to deal with the causes which came to the Chancery court. As we have seen however, there are extant records of his decisions some of which relate to cases in that court.⁵⁰ How often the Lord Chancellor was occupied in either Chancery, the court of Star Chamber or other courts apart from the occasions referred to above and those recorded by his cousin

⁴⁷ W. R. D. Jones, *The Mid-Tudor Crisis, 1539-63* (London, 1973), p. 45, (1 Edw. VI, c.8).

⁴⁸ *APC, 1547-50*, pp. 48-9.

⁴⁹ Slavin, 'Lord Chancellor Wriothesley and Reform of Augmentations', pp. 60-3. See below pp. 220-33.

⁵⁰ PRO, *Early Chancery Proceedings*, vol. lx, files, 1095-1173 cover the period of Wriothesley's chancellorship. The petitions addressed to the lord chancellor within those files indicate that there were in excess of 3000 separate actions, covering petitioners from the whole of England from Cornwall to Yorkshire and Kent to Lancashire, but virtually nothing further north. The larger proportion of them concern disputes over land. Few involve the nobility: the gentry and yeoman classes predominate though there are some women complainants.

Charles Wriothesley, cannot be established with any certainty. Direct evidence is not available because of the loss of the Star Chamber registers.⁵¹ It would nonetheless not be overstating the position to claim for Wriothesley that he was as effective in dealing with civil cases in Chancery or Star Chamber matters as his predecessors.

Wriothesley and the Privy Council

From May 1544 onwards Wriothesley presided over meetings of the privy council, Henry's council of state, whenever he was present, which was more often than not. It dealt with every imaginable issue from approving warrants for payments to couriers, to hearing complaints from those who thought that they were oppressed by the powerful and wealthy.⁵² To quote Elton, 'nothing that happened within the realm appeared to fall outside its competence'.⁵³ The council made orders dealing with ships taken as prizes,⁵⁴ issued passports,⁵⁵ negotiated the exchange of prisoners,⁵⁶ gave specific instructions as to how the Lord Admiral was to deal with French galleys roaming the Channel and the south coast, sent ambassadors abroad, punished those accused of heresy,⁵⁷ considered what action to take about murders and affrays,⁵⁸ made provision for sea defences both in England and Calais/Boulogne,⁵⁹ and chastised the

⁵¹ Guy, *The Court of Star Chamber*, p. 9.

⁵² Elton, *The Tudor Constitution*, p. 246. *APC, 1542-47*; The records show quite clearly that the Lord Chancellor presided at meetings certainly from the date of the first entry on 10 May 1545. The register(s) from the end of July 1543 to 10 May 1545 are missing.

⁵³ Elton, *The Tudor Constitution*, p. 102.

⁵⁴ *APC, 1542-47*, p. 250.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 243, 244, 305.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 210, 284, 314.

⁵⁷ It took a very close interest in the activities and recantations of Dr. Edward Crome. *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. I, pt. ii, 842, 845, 847-8. For a full discussion of Crome's activities in London see S. Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford 1989), pp. 307-322, 362-68, 402. See also chapter 6 below.

⁵⁸ *APC, 1542-47*, pp. 271, 289.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 241.

servants of the earl of Bath who 'played lewde plays in the suburbes in London'.⁶⁰ It even took an interest in a dispute between John Gage and Nicholas Pelham as to the course of a drain near Glynde, Sussex, and made directions as to how the matter was to be resolved.⁶¹ The council met almost daily and it was rare that no business was recorded in the register.

The royal council of Henry VII, largely composed of those on whom he had relied to take him to the throne,⁶² had gradually translated itself into the privy council of the last six years of Henry VIII, but in the intervening period first Wolsey and then Cromwell usurped many, if not most of the functions of the inner council and only in about 1536 is it possible to see clear signs of the growth of a formalised body.

Cromwell's vision was of a group of office holders such as the Lord Chancellor, the archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Treasurer, Lord Privy Seal, secretary and others and the Act of Precedence of 1539 helped to crystallise its membership.⁶³

Over the last twenty years there has been vigorous debate as to the process which brought the privy council into being. Elton's view that it was a conscious and calculated creation of Cromwell has been persuasively challenged by (among others) David Starkey and John Guy, who have argued that the evolution of the privy council was less the conscious act of any one man, than a gradual growth necessitated by the factional problems of the Boleyn affair, the need for a massive political and military response to the 1536 rebellion and the growing financial demands of a foreign policy which threatened increasingly to drain all available sources of money. There had been a select king's council well before 1539 but only in August 1540 twelve days after

⁶⁰ Ibid, 212, 407.

⁶¹ Ibid, 291.

⁶² S. B. Chrimes, *Henry VII*, (London, 1972), Appendix B.

⁶³ 31 Henry VIII, c. 10.

Cromwell's execution, did an institutional privy council formally announce itself with the appointment of a clerk (William Paget) and the introduction of a minute book in which to record its business.⁶⁴ The minute books (the registers) have survived almost complete since then except for the period between July 1543 and May 1545. Not the least of the factors which brought the privy council into full form in 1540 was the existence and influence of the privy chamber, separate and distinct, but with its own power base derived from the personal attachment of its members to the sovereign. Cromwell undoubtedly had the idea for a more formal council in the mid 1530's but the practicalities of political life prevented its implementation at that time.⁶⁵ Indeed it can be cogently argued that the death of Cromwell provided the opportunity for the flourishing of a body which his own all-embracing control of administration had inhibited, but which burst into full flower with his elimination from the political scene. Someone or something had to take his place.

But whatever the genesis of the post-Cromwellian privy council it carried out the king's wishes; the members of it might suggest, debate, negotiate and interpret, but in the last resort everything that it did as a body was to implement the expressed directions of the sovereign.⁶⁶ Its operations gave rise to much correspondence and a mass of paper work of various kinds which, until the latter years of Elizabeth's reign,

⁶⁴ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 646-7.

⁶⁵ On the emergence of the Privy Council see Elton, *Tudor Revolution in Government*, his *Reform and Reformation: England 1509-1558*; his *England under the Tudors* 3rd ed., (see especially pp. 183 and 480); his *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government*; D. R. Starkey, *The Reign of Henry VIII, Personalities and Politics* (London, 1985); J. A. Guy, 'The Privy Council: Revolution or Evolution?', in C. Coleman and D. R. Starkey (eds.) *Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 59-85; D. Starkey, 'Introduction: Court History in Perspective', in D. R. Starkey (ed.), *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London, 1987), pp. 10-21; Guy, *Tudor England*, chaps. 6 and 7; Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, pp. 48-53. It has to be said however that many historians use the words 'privy council' as a convenient means of describing the body of the king's closest advisers who with him met, discussed and decided important matters of state well before 1540. For example see MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, pp. 215 and 219.

⁶⁶ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 426.

usually survived (if it did), among the personal papers of the sovereign's secretaries or their clerks. The offices provided at Hampton Court for privy council members were ill-equipped, and in November 1545, Paget, then in France, wrote to Petre pleading for more adequate provision for him to carry out his official duties by providing more accommodation 'for you knowe that the chamber over the gate will scant receyve my bedde, and a table to write at, for my self'.⁶⁷

The privy council was much involved in the consideration of foreign affairs and inevitably the Lord Chancellor was drawn into those issues which most monopolised the attention of Henry. Wriothesley's role was pivotal. A letter from the privy council at Westminster dated 4 September 1546 in Wriothesley's hand, reported on meetings which had been held with the French, imperial and Scottish ambassadors, touched on Irish problems and ended with 'as for money, all the shift shalbe made that is possible but yet the store is very small'.⁶⁸ Much of the routine work is mentioned in the state papers, but the reports and correspondence of the imperial ambassador fill in some of the gaps. They show, for example, that the Lord Chancellor speaking to Chapuys on behalf of Henry, in July 1545, was very angry at the arrest and detention of English ships in Channel ports, despite which he had expressed his willingness to discuss with Chapuys the restoration of good relations between England and the empire if the causes of friction could be resolved.⁶⁹ As it was generally recognised that Wriothesley was a supporter of good relations with the emperor, Van der Delft, the new imperial ambassador, manipulated an opportunity in August 1545 for a discussion as they rode together for the best part of a day, hoping to canvass the prospects for peace between

⁶⁷ *APC, 1542-47*, p. xiii.

⁶⁸ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 854.

⁶⁹ *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 166, 174.

England and the empire and of course to ferret out such information as he could regarding any events at court which could be of interest to the emperor.⁷⁰ The prospects had not been helped however, by the delays in dealing with the seizure of ships and their contents some eighteen months earlier, but Van der Delft told the emperor that despite the continuing resentment, he had secured Wriothesley's assurance that the Lord Chancellor would do all he could to preserve their old friendship and alliance.⁷¹ This, like many discussions between ambassadors and their counterparts, or foreign rulers, was often reduced into a process of attempted mutual deception, and the chancellor's task, as that of the king's ambassadors, would be to promote that which Henry wanted the foreign envoys to believe. Consistency was not the prime characteristic of English foreign policy in the mid-Tudor period. As we have already seen, the role of the ambassador in a foreign land was as much to act as a spy for his sovereign and indeed not infrequently an agent provocateur in the country to which he was sent, as to represent the interests of his own country. The English ambassadors went abroad to do their lying for their country; Wriothesley was able to do his in England.

Wriothesley and Proclamations

As Lord Chancellor Wriothesley played an important role in the drafting and enforcement of proclamations. He became Chancellor only a few years after a major change in the potential for the use of proclamations with the passing of the Proclamations Act of 1539.⁷² During the three years of Wriothesley's chancellorship just over forty were promulgated. Of these, twenty-four were directly concerned with

⁷⁰ *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 186.

⁷¹ *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 400, 407.

⁷² Statute of Proclamations, 31, Henry VIII, c. 8.

the French war and given Wriothesley's close involvement with the financial problems associated with the campaigns in France, it is entirely reasonable to assume that he had a hand in drafting or supervising the drafting of them as the king's principal legal officer. With a parliament to approve new laws, the scope for the king and his council to 'legislate' outside that body was circumscribed and most extra-parliamentary 'legislation' was achieved by the use of proclamations.⁷³ As an alternative the privy council issued directives to local authorities instructing them to make regulations to deal with a particular problem. Despite the avowed purpose of the 1539 Act to provide a statutory basis for the issue of proclamations, the majority of those which came into existence after the passing of the act made no reference to it.

Examination shows that most proclamations were issued to deal with urgent matters at a time when parliament met infrequently, and they were the principal alternative means by which the country's administration could be carried out on a day-to-day basis. The proclamations issued between 1544 and 1547 covered the whole range of social and economic issues, providing for the expulsion of French nationals from England, limiting the price of French wines, restricting the transport of food overseas, securing the continued services of mariners and increasing their wages, and seeking volunteers for service against the enemy. Very few touched upon religious matters. Others concerned the hunting of game and deer, the use of handguns, prohibited heretical books, and one dated 11 June 1546 announced the signing of the peace treaty between England and France. Of the remaining proclamations it is probable that the adjournment of the Trinity and Michaelmas law terms was associated either with the plague or was the result of the need to delay hearings at a time of

⁷³ Elton, *The Tudor Constitution*, pp. 21-3, 27-30, 66, 174, in which the author discusses the Act of Proclamations of 1539, its scope and enforcement..

national emergency. It is difficult to imagine that there were many with which Wriothesley did not have some personal involvement.⁷⁴ They were also used as a response to petitions from the Corporation of London, to requests from particular trades (such as cloth makers), and on occasion arose from specific concerns of the king.⁷⁵ It is likely that generally speaking drafts were prepared in the office of the secretary, and certain that Henry corrected some of them himself.⁷⁶

More specifically the chancellor may well have been consulted about the preparation of one in 1544 which required justices to search for grain to prevent hoarding and profiteering because of escalating prices.⁷⁷ In wartime on a sensitive issue of this nature it was of the greatest importance that justices carried out their functions effectively. As we have seen in 1539 Wriothesley had lectured the justices in Hampshire to the same purpose,⁷⁸ and a proclamation issued in August 1546 expressed great dissatisfaction with their failure to compel compliance with the king's proclamations, and with laws and statutes generally.⁷⁹ It is likely also that Wriothesley would have had a hand in the promulgation of a proclamation announcing the debasement of English coins, given his position as Henry's principal adviser on financial matters.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ R. Steele, *Tudor and Stuart Proclamations* (London, 1910), vol. 1; P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, (eds.), *Tudor Royal Proclamations, 1485-1553*, 3 vols. (Yale 1964), i, no. 249.

⁷⁵ R. W. Heinze, *The Proclamations of the Tudor Kings* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 130, quoting the Corporation of London Record Office, Rep. 11/426; *LP*, xiii, (2), 924. One of Henry's concerns was the increasing flow of heretical books from the continent expressed in a letter to the queen regent in Brussels in June 1546. *LP*, xxi, (1), 1098.

⁷⁶ Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, i, nos. 186, 191; Heinze, *Proclamations*, p. 18 and n. 56.

⁷⁷ Wriothesley, i, p. 147, 'wheate and other graine was very skant'. Wriothesley expressed the same anxiety to Paget in early November 1545, *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 835. Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, i, no. 242.

⁷⁸ Heinze, *Proclamations*, p. 147; Wriothesley, i, p. 147; *LP*, xiv, (1), 775. Lord Chancellor Rich made much the same complaint to justices in the Star Chamber in December 1549; Richard Grafton, *Chronicle of the History of England* ed. H. Ellis (London, 1809), ii, pp. 506-7.

⁷⁹ Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, i, no. 274.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, no. 228.

In early 1544 the Council sent a letter to the mayor of Bristol requiring him to issue a proclamation announcing that he and the sheriffs were to press mariners for service in the navy at Portsmouth by the end of June.⁸¹ They were going to be needed for the approaching war with the French. In November 1544 a proclamation justified the prohibition of unlicensed export of grain because a 'perpetual peace' had been concluded with France (that proved not to be the case), and there was no longer any need to export such quantities of grain as had been necessary in time of war.⁸² A year later under its penal provisions the council committed John Deye of Norfolk to prison for taking grain to London for sale in breach of proclamation, when he ought have despatched it to the garrison in Calais.⁸³ With the imminent start of the French war, Wriothesley approved a proclamation issued on 2 June 1544, and affirmed six weeks later, that all Frenchmen should depart from England within six days.⁸⁴ It excepted only those who had applied to become denizens; they were to go to the Lord Chancellor's house 'to know if they are on the roll, otherwise to depart the realm'.⁸⁵ This proclamation was countermanded on 30 September on the sole authority of the queen 'notwithstanding' (as it reads), the former proclamation of Henry.⁸⁶ Perhaps the queen's action was intended as a smoke screen to prevent public awareness that the king had left his army in Boulogne and returned quietly to England on the same day as the proclamation.

In June 1545 a proclamation which provided that barristers were to be certificated before practising in the crown courts, had been made 'with the advice of

⁸¹ *APC, 1542-47*, p. 192.

⁸² Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, i, no. 269.

⁸³ *APC, 1542-47*, p. 281.

⁸⁴ Steele, *Tudor and Stuart Proclamations*, i, p. 27.

⁸⁵ *LP*, xix, (1), 613, 936; *BL, Harleian MS. 422*, fos. 202-3.

⁸⁶ *LP*, xix, (2), 332.

the Lord Chancellor of England'.⁸⁷ Wriothesley personally corrected a draft of a proclamation issued in July 1546 which forbade the reading of heretical writings, and particularised a number of prohibited authors and books.⁸⁸ As we shall see in our next chapter that coincided with the vigorous heresy hunt then in progress. This almost certainly followed the rejection in the Commons of a bill which reflected Henry's hostility to the advance in reformist religious views and literature during the previous three years.⁸⁹ As one consequence reformers in Henry's own privy chamber hastened to rid themselves of incriminating material. While the authorship of most of the proclamations which emanated from the privy council in the years of Wriothesley's chancellorship is unclear, there is every reason to suppose that he had a hand in drawing most of them and would have been as aware as anyone of the nature and purposes they were intended to address, though hard evidence of his input is available infrequently.

Since 1955 historians have been in dispute as to whether the Proclamations Act of 1539 was a conscious and deliberate attempt to impose a royal despotism; Elton thought not. His view was that rather than creating an independent royal legislative power 'it subjected the prerogative to the sovereignty of the king in parliament' and that the statute was not another means of despotic control.⁹⁰ Hurstfield's opinion is that despite the relatively innocuous outcome of the debate over the bill in parliament, the intention was to find a means 'for parliament voluntarily to give up its authority

⁸⁷ Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 1, no. 270; Steele, *Tudor and Stuart Proclamations*, i, p. 30.

⁸⁸ Heinze, *Proclamations*, p. 189; He has suggested that this proclamation had have been drafted much earlier in 1543.

⁸⁹ *LP*, xxi, (1), 1233; Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, i, no. 272; *Journals of the House of Lords*, 10 vols. 1, p. 269. In the spring of 1542, Bishop Bonner sent out an index for prohibited books to his clergy.

⁹⁰ Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government*, pp. 211-4.

and vest it in the crown'.⁹¹ He recognises that the attempt failed but that its failure did not imply any lack of effort on the part of Henry and Cromwell to establish a despotic monarchy. Even if Hurstfield is correct, which the present writer doubts, the combined and determined hostility of the lords and commons emasculated the bill, and left a fairly bland Act on the statute book.

During the thirty-eight year reign of Henry VIII two hundred and fifteen proclamations were initiated, compared with one hundred and twelve in Edward's six year reign, perhaps an indication of the difficulties experienced in the administration of the state over that troubled time under an infant king who ruled through a council dominated by one man.⁹² The subject matter or scope of the large majority of them in the years 1544-47 show that they were not a potential or actual instrument of Tudor despotism, but administrative directions to the population at large on a number of important and urgent matters.

Wriothesley and Parliament

Throughout his reign, Henry had periodically called his Parliament together to resolve some of the great issues of state. In his last ten years Henry needed its help to deal with problems regarding his wives, religion, economic and financial difficulties, attainders and wars. Wriothesley had been a member of the Commons in the 1539 and 1543 parliament but did not serve the one which met on 14 March 1544, as he had two weeks earlier been created Baron Wriothesley of Titchfield.

⁹¹ J. Hurstfield, 'Was there a Tudor despotism after all', *TRHS* (1967), pp. 83-108; G. R. Elton, 'The Political Creed of Thomas Cromwell', *TRHS* (1956), pp. 69-92, and by the same author, 'Henry VIII's Act of Proclamations', *EHR* (1960), 75, pp. 208-22; his *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government, Political Thought*, vols. 1 and 2 (London, 1974), and *England under the Tudors* 3rd ed. (London, 1954-1991).

⁹² Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, i, nos. 59 to 274 (Henry), and nos. 275 to 387, (Edward).

As Lord Chancellor from May 1544 Thomas Wriothesley presided over all the sittings of the House of Lords and was normally present both to open and to adjourn the House at the end of each day's session. Even when the king was present, which was not unusual, the chancellor would speak for him, though at the end of the 1545 session the king chose to address parliament personally.

The first parliamentary session at which Wriothesley presided was that for which writs had been issued in December 1544 for a meeting on 30 January 1545 mainly to deal with the growing financial burden of the French war and the urgent need for funds to support it. The old idea of providing bishops with fixed salaries and sequestrating their estates was canvassed again, crown lands were sold and money borrowed at high rates of interest. There was also currency debasement which prompted Wriothesley to describe the mint as the country's 'holy ancre, [anchor], holding fast the ship of state when all else failed'.⁹³ Paget, among others, argued against calling parliament together at that time and in the event it was decided to defer it until Michaelmas. It was hoped that by that date a peace treaty would have been concluded with France, which would ensure that many who might otherwise be with the army or at least on call to serve in it, could attend.⁹⁴ Before the end of December 1544 therefore a new series of writs decreed that parliament would meet instead on 15 October 1545.

There had been a great deal of doubt about holding any parliament in 1545 because of the plague, compounded by shortages of food, and the chancellor was much concerned at the difficulty in obtaining a definite answer from the privy council as to

⁹³ PRO, SP. 1/210, fo. 14, (LP, xx, (2), 729).

⁹⁴ LP, xix, (2), 689.

whether, when and where it was to assemble.⁹⁵ Henry himself, as always, was greatly agitated about the risk of infection and moved restlessly from one residence to another. There was a suggestion that parliament might assemble at Reading but that idea was abandoned because of the logistical problems which would arise from the need to move the law courts along with it.⁹⁶ Another discarded suggestion was a gathering at Windsor. Wriothesley had to press hard for a firm decision, 'for the writtes must have a good tyme for their dispeche... in cas of prorogacion I see not howe we shal lyve without summe present helpe, which I doubt not but your wisdomes doe consider'.⁹⁷ Ultimately in October the privy council told the chancellor that the members of parliament would have to go to Westminster,⁹⁸ leaving Wriothesley much relieved; all was 'nowe... in hande for our Parliament matiers'.⁹⁹ When it assembled the Upper House was significantly smaller in numerical terms than had been the case ten years earlier. As a result of attainders and the failure of male heirs of mature age, the nobles could muster only 42 as against 57, and the lords spiritual fewer also by reason of the removal of abbots and priors.¹⁰⁰ The session began on 23 November in the king's presence, Wriothesley opening the session with a speech which 'set forth the invasion effected by the king of France and his allies... both by land and sea' and touching on the planned programme of legislation.¹⁰¹ Parliament was primarily to debate the most important work of the parliament, the subsidy bill drafted by the Lord Chancellor.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ PRO, SP. 1/207, fo. 109, (*LP*, xx, (2), 326). The mayor of London warned Wriothesley of serious food shortages in the capital. SP. 1/210, fo. 14, (*LP*, xx, (2), 729).

⁹⁶ PRO, SP 1/207, fos. 95-6, (*LP*, xx, (2), 302). A considerable problem was that about 20% of the house of commons was composed of lawyers. A. D. Tucker, 'The Commons in the Parliament of 1545', unpublished D. Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1967, p. 157.

⁹⁷ PRO, SP. 1/207, fos. 64-6, (*LP*, xx, (2), 272).

⁹⁸ *APC, 1542-47*, p. 261. The note reads, 'A letter to my Lord Chawncellor signifying unto him the Kinges Highnes plesor towching the adjourning of the Parlament from Wyndesour to London'.

⁹⁹ PRO, SP. 1/208, fo. 47, (*LP*, xx, (2), 425).

¹⁰⁰ Lehmborg, *The Later Parliaments*, p. 217.

¹⁰¹ *LP*, xx, (2), 899; *CSP Spanish*, viii, 279; Tucker, 'The commons in the Parliament of 1545', p. 63.

¹⁰² Lehmborg, *The Later Parliaments*, p. 219.

The act passed both houses by 19 December, but with other public bills calling for attention, in some of which Wriothesley also had a hand, all was not completed until almost Christmas, and the Lords had to sit both morning and afternoon for several days.¹⁰³ Parliament had been very busy with its public legislation, but there were also private bills to be considered, and by 17 December only three acts had passed both Houses.¹⁰⁴ It was at the end of this session on 23 December 1545 that the king delivered in person, for the only occasion in his thirty-eight year reign, the customary oration in response to that of the Speaker of the Commons. The significance of his theme of unity, charity and concord is considered fully in a later chapter. In the event, the factional struggles at court intensified, until late in 1546 the reformers won control of both the privy chamber and privy council. Parliament was prorogued until 1546 and later prorogued again until January 1547, when it met only to be informed of the death of the king.

In August 1546, Wriothesley wrote to Paget a letter which exposed all his concern over the future, and to the growing evidence of faction within the council. 'The world is so doubtful and dangerous' he wrote, 'that we can only trust in God and look that our plainness be not deceived by the doubleness of the world as it hath been of late days'. He foresaw the uncertainties within the court and council from the developing partisanship, exacerbated by the marked deterioration in the king's health, and fears as to what would happen when Henry died. By September 1546, Wriothesley claimed that he was tired and overworked; 'we have sitten as we commonly do from morning till night', he said, but it is much more likely that his anxieties arose from the growing influence of the reformers in the council with the

¹⁰³ Ibid, pp. 221-2, and chapter 6 for a review of the events of 1545-6.

¹⁰⁴ PRO, SP. 1/212, fo.45, (*LP*, xx, (2), 995).

corresponding decrease in his influence and that of the other conservatives.¹⁰⁵ The residue of business required Parliament to meet on 14 January and by 27 January it had dealt with the bill of attainder of the Howards, in the interim debating a bill proposing the reorganisation of the court of Augmentations, which though approved by the Upper House never passed the Commons because of Henry's death on 28 January. Three other bills also fell as a consequence.¹⁰⁶

Despite the concerns of Wriothesley over the growing influence of the reformers in the council, he still presided over its meetings, and four days after Henry's death he announced that event and the accession of Edward to the assembled Houses of Parliament. He dissolved the session, surrendered the Great Seal to Edward, was re-appointed as chancellor and ordered to prepare new patents for all 'law officers, justices, attorneys, Clerkes of the Crowne and Solicitours to be sworn for the quiete ordre of the realme and the due administration of justice' which he did the following day.¹⁰⁷ So on 31 January Edward's accession was proclaimed and the next day the Lord Chancellor went to Westminster Hall 'into the Chauncerie, and sate there alone, calling of the judges and officers of the court, who, kneeling before him, receaved their othes to the Kings Majestie'. He dealt likewise with the judges of the Kings Bench and the judges of the other courts, and swore 'six new sergeantes of the lawe' before attending two days later the 'serjeantes feast' at Lincoln's Inn in Chancery Lane.¹⁰⁸ For a few weeks Lord Chancellor Wriothesley was the highest ranking figure in the kingdom after the new young king, and that probably showed only too clearly in his demeanour. With the earls of Shrewsbury and Essex, he was appointed by the council

¹⁰⁵ PRO, SP. 1/225, fo. 66, (LP, xxi, (2), 172).

¹⁰⁶ Lehmberg, *The Later Parliaments*, p. 236.

¹⁰⁷ CSP, *Spanish*, ix, 20-2; APC, 1547-50, pp. 3, 4, 6.

¹⁰⁸ Wriothesley, i, p. 179.

to a commission to decide claims of service at Edward's coronation.¹⁰⁹ Twelve days later Wriothesley was created earl of Southampton in accordance with the wishes of the late king, as articulated by secretary William Paget, and received the material benefit which accompanied his elevation, in the form of lands to the value of over £300.

At Edward's coronation on 20 February the Lord Chancellor bore the sword of state, but the apparent harmony of the occasion lasted only a few days longer.¹¹⁰ For a period of several months after 24 February Wriothesley did not attend any meetings of the privy council, and from early in that month the newly appointed Protector presided in his place. At the beginning of March, Paget provided the Lord Chancellor with a draft licence authorising the grant of free pardons to all who sued for them within the period provided in the general free pardon issued at the coronation.¹¹¹ But the licence was never issued. On 5 March, without warning, Edward North, Anthony Browne and Thomas Seymour, descended on Wriothesley, seized the Great Seal, and ordered him to his London home 'as in pryson', though his membership of the council lasted a few days more.¹¹² The explanation for his fall from office is investigated in a later chapter, but the result was to reduce him overnight from a position of great eminence to at least temporary political oblivion.

The Indispensable Civil Servant

It is arguable that during his years as chancellor, Wriothesley (not Norfolk nor Gardiner) was seen by Henry and the country at large as the king's principal minister,

¹⁰⁹ *CSP, Edward VI*, SP. 10/1, no. 4.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, SP. 10/1, no. 12.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, SP. 10/1, no. 25.

¹¹² *APC, 1542-47*, pp. 48-59.

in the sense that he operated as a chief executive, a reliable and trusted manager, but not really a shaper of national policy. The authority derived from that position ensured his involvement in many matters normally far removed from the primary legal functions of a Lord Chancellor.

In June 1544 Wriothesley, with Suffolk and Paget, was commissioned to treat with the earl of Lennox on the proposed marriage between the earl and Henry's niece, Margaret, as one element in Henry's efforts to keep both loyal and committed a well armed and influential ally north of the border.¹¹³ In the next month, Wriothesley, Cranmer, Hertford, Thirlby and Petre were appointed as advisers to queen Catherine while she acted as regent for the king who was away in France with his army.¹¹⁴ Of the five councillors, Wriothesley and Hertford were to be permanently resident at court, and in their absence Cranmer and Petre were to take their places. It may be significant that of the five, only Wriothesley was an out and out conservative, though Petre was somewhat equivocal about his religious inclinations.¹¹⁵ The clear impression however is that Henry deliberately provided a 'religious' balance among the queen's advisers during his absence in France. Wriothesley and the other four attended the council under the queen's regency on a regular basis¹¹⁶ and Catherine wrote to Henry in July commenting upon 'the diligence of his councillors here'.¹¹⁷ After a number of moves, the council, with Wriothesley always in attendance, finally came to rest at Eltham at the end of August, when he personally journeyed to Kingston to collect a

¹¹³ *LP*, xix, (1), 779, 812 (86).

¹¹⁴ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 764; (*LP*, xix, (1), 1035 (78)). T. Rymer, *Foedera conventiones...* 17 vols. (London, 1726-7), vol. xv, p. 45.

¹¹⁵ F. G. Emmison, *Tudor Secretary: Sir William Petre at Court and Home* (London 1971), p. 107; C. Read, *Mr. Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth* 3 vols. (Oxford, 1925), i, p. 439.

¹¹⁶ PRO, SP. 1/190, fos. 68, 89, 108, 156, 213, (*LP*, xix, (1), 927, 937, 943, 954, 981-2, 1014).

¹¹⁷ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 10, 12-4, (*LP*, xix, (1), 979).

packet of letters which he read and upon which he reported to the queen.¹¹⁸ In September he wrote at length to Catherine advising on the steps that he had taken to provide money for the king's needs and what arrangements he had made for the despatch of shipping from various ports on the king's service.¹¹⁹ He assured her: 'let not the queen's majesty in anyways trouble herself, for God shall turn all for the best. And sure we be that the king's majesty's person is out of all danger, and so be the rest too, I doubt not, for it shall not yet enter into my creed that the Frenchmen will cope with us'.¹²⁰

Every indication shows that Wriothesley was very attentive to his role in the regency over the three months of Henry's absence abroad in 1544. Among the powers given to the members of that council was the authorisation to sign grants of land to those of the mayor, aldermen and citizens of the city of London who had advanced money for the king's 'enterprise against the French king'. The grants were subject to the reservation by the crown of the right to revoke them within one year, an example no doubt of Henry's cautious, even parsimonious nature.¹²¹ Also in July 1544, Wriothesley with others was authorised to pledge the king's manors and lordships to the mayor and aldermen of London for loans of money provided for the French expedition, and with Hertford he was instructed to compound with Henry's tenants for their service in France; cash in return for service in the field.¹²² This authority was but one of many devices, as we shall see, to generate funds to maintain the army in France.

But Wriothesley in common with the remainder of the regency council and the larger privy council was careful always to carry out Henry's instructions. In

¹¹⁸ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 767, (*LP*, xix, (2), 206).

¹¹⁹ PRO, SP. 1/192, fos. 30, and 49, (*LP*, xix, (2), 192, 206).

¹²⁰ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 767.

¹²¹ PRO, Patent Rolls, C.66. 747; *LP*, xix, (1), 1035 (87).

¹²² Rymer, *Foedera, conventiones...* vol. xv, pp. 45-7.

September he wrote that he could 'see not that we can do anything in it without knowledge of the king's majesty's pleasure',¹²³ and when a dispute developed over about the sealing of court documents Wriothesley in a letter to Paget bowed to the king's will, 'and if it be his Majesties pleasure to have things so passe... I shalbe content and have so much the lesse care'.¹²⁴

As we have already seen, Wriothesley had been employed on embassy to Scotland in 1544 with Suffolk, and in the middle of the following year with the threat of invasion from France, he with Browne, and St. John, formed the commission of array for the southern counties under Suffolk as Henry's lieutenant.¹²⁵ He and Wriothesley had tried to encourage Chapuys in May 1545 to work secretly for an Anglo-French peace though Henry was opposed to any such move. At this period Suffolk was working hand in glove with Wriothesley in a number of areas; they saw ambassadors together and in January 1545 sat at Baynard's castle to assess citizens for their contribution to the benevolence and arranged the borrowing in Antwerp.¹²⁶ That the relationship with Suffolk was close is testified by the fact that Wriothesley was appointed with Browne and St. John as Suffolk's executors while he on his part stood as godfather to Wriothesley's son.¹²⁷ Wriothesley's position close to the king made him a suitable conduit through which matters involving relationships with continental powers could be channelled. In July 1545 when the Dover crossing was restricted by the war, a request by Van der Delft that a courier be allowed to pass the Channel, was refused by the Lord Chancellor on Henry's direction, and in October 1546 a similar

¹²³ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol.1, pt. ii, 767, (*LP*, xix, (2), 207).

¹²⁴ PRO, SP. 1/209, fo. 213, (*LP*, xx, (2), 713).

¹²⁵ PRO, SP. 1/201, fo. 143, 1/202, fo. 82, 1/203, fo. 166, (*LP*, xx, (1), 814, 846, 958, 1166, 1275). Wriothesley also helped Suffolk in a transaction involving the wool-export business of a Milanese, Baptista Borone. *LP*, xix, (1), 828, 1035 (111). *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 142.

¹²⁶ PRO, SP. 1/188, fos. 57, 197, 215, (*LP*, xix, (1), 630, 725, 733), *LP*, xix, (1), 759, 779.

¹²⁷ PRO, SP. 1/180, fo. 69, (*LP*, xviii, (1), 894), Wriothesley, i, p. 154.

enquiry from de Selve received the same answer.¹²⁸ Only a month earlier de Selve had reported to the French king that he had heard 'that the king was ill, but the chancellor today said it was only a cold and now cured', and had accepted that explanation coming from such an authoritative and reliable source.¹²⁹ Indeed on his first arrival in London in the summer of 1546, one of de Selve's first actions was to seek a meeting with Wriothesley telling Francis that he 'went last night to visit the chancellor of England who has great influence with the king'.¹³⁰ Van der Delft was also convinced that Wriothesley with Paget and Gardiner was the king's principal adviser.¹³¹

There had never been any doubt that Wriothesley's personal views inclined him towards closer contacts with the empire than with France. The imperial ambassadors were well aware of his opinions, and not infrequently commented upon them. But the Lord Chancellor knew that in matters of foreign policy there was only one person whose opinion was important; since the execution of Cromwell, Henry alone had determined its course. It was his obsession to bring Scotland under the authority of the English crown, and his passionate desire to retain a permanent foothold in France that pointed the path down which foreign affairs were directed, and the actions of the king's ministers reflected that determination.

In August 1546 Van der Delft wrote to the emperor and told him that there were signs of a growing polarisation of factions within the council and though the pope was seen by the religious conservatives to be 'their enemy', he could 'perceive no indication of their having any understanding with the Protestants'. In his opinion Gardiner, Wriothesley and Paget were the leaders in the council, but only Gardiner, St.

¹²⁸ PRO, SP. 1/203, fo. 151; (LP, xx, (1), 1156, xxi, (2), 281); de Selve, *Correspondence Politique*, p. 45.

¹²⁹ LP, xxi, (2), 129.

¹³⁰ LP, xxi, (1), 1207, 1251.

¹³¹ LP, xxi, (1), 1463; CSP, *Spanish*, viii, 308.

John and the Lord Chancellor were wholly attached to the emperor's interests.¹³² He judged that the Lord Chancellor's functions on a day-to-day basis were as much involved with diplomacy as with financial and judicial duties and the state papers amply bear this out. Such a view had some justification as Wriothesley with Gardiner and others, was in negotiation in October 1546 with Philip the duke of Bavaria to conclude arrangements for his marriage with princess Mary, and to finalise a league between Henry and the Elector.¹³³

The Lord Chancellor's concerns with the French war embraced all aspects of its management, not only the prime issue of finance. He wrote to the bishop of Ely who had been appointed as the head commissioner of the musters, to remind him that the privileges granted by Henry to Cambridge University excused its students from being mustered for service in France, ('the members should not therefore be troubled'), and found time to ask the Deputy in Calais to give free passage to one of Wriothesley's own servants who had compassionate reasons for going to Flanders to see his bereaved mother.¹³⁴ He sent off a rather irritated letter to Paget asking for an explanation as to why letters for Henry from German princes which Paget had received had not been passed on by him for the attention of the council.¹³⁵ There were even the rare occasions when the chancellor became involved in legal matters remote from London. At the end of 1544 a bill of complaint had been lodged with the wardens of the East and Middle Marches, arising out of a dispute about the provision of horses for the military operations there. The earl of Shrewsbury, then the Lieutenant of the North, reported to Wriothesley on the decision of the wardenry court held at Alnwick on 18

¹³² *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 451, 464.

¹³³ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 880, (*LP*, xxi, (2), 256);.

¹³⁴ *PRO, SP. 1/187*, fo. 69, (*LP*, xix, (2), 438).

¹³⁵ *PRO, SP. 1/195*, fo. 112, (*LP*, xix, (2), 614).

December, as the court had been unable to reach a final decision because of doubts about the evidence. The Lord Chancellor's assistance was sought to resolve the matter but as is frequently the case only half the story can be traced through the state papers.¹³⁶ All these multifarious concerns demonstrate not only the personal stature of the Lord Chancellor, but also the importance of his office, his status and his close and confidential relationship with Henry.

His general administrative competence involved Wriothesley intimately in every facet of the day to day management of the state's affairs including the problem of financing Henry's wars and it is to his success in raising huge sums of money to pay for the military ambitions of the king that we now turn.

¹³⁶ HMC, *Shrewsbury and Talbot Papers*, ii, *Talbot Papers*, vol. A, folio 203.

5. Lord Chancellor: Henry's Treasurer and Financier

Introduction

Wolsey and Cromwell had exercised supreme executive control over the royal finances, and after the fall of the latter the privy council undertook that task for a short period, though without much success. Much of Wriothesley's training before his appointment as Lord Chancellor had made him a financial expert. As early as 1529 he had been a servant of Edmund Peckham the king's cofferer,¹ and though his active involvement in the monastic dissolution and the assessment of the wealth which resulted from it in no way fitted him for the duties which were to be required of him in his judicial office, the experience he gained from it equipped him to deal with the most pressing of Henry's problems, the need for money to pay for his military ambitions. The resolution of that problem was to be Wriothesley's main concern throughout the period of his chancellorship and his relative success was very probably the key to his political standing. The process proved however to be tortuous and mentally and physically exhausting.²

As we have seen in chapter 2, Wriothesley had been involved in raising money to pay the troops sent north in October 1536 to deal with the Yorkshire rebels, the same year as he was appointed king's engraver, an office he held until appointed Lord Chancellor.³ As Secretary he had gained wide experience of the financial implications

¹ C. E. Challis, *The Tudor Coinage* (Manchester 1978), p. 30. Peckham held the office for twenty years. See above p. 16.

² The issues of financing wars in Henry's years are surveyed by Richard Hoyle, 'War and Public Finance' in D. MacCulloch (ed.), *The Reign of Henry VIII: Politics, Policy and Piety*, (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 75-99.

³ PRO, SP. 1/108, fo. 187, (LP, xi, 769); Challis, *Tudor Coinage*, p. 30.

of running military campaigns against Scotland and France, and in December 1540 had prepared the summary of payments for the garrisons in the border country.⁴ In March 1542 the Lord Privy Seal delivered to Wriothesley and Sadler letters issued under the privy seal, in effect royal bonds, which they sent on to royal commissioners in several shires to be completed by them and given to those who had lent money to the king.⁵ In the autumn of 1542 Wriothesley had controlled from London the employment of an armed force sent to the north, and in mid-October 1545, Wriothesley with others, was authorised to sign warrants using the dry stamp to pay the garrisons in France and on the Scottish borders, an authority which was re-issued exactly twelve months later.⁶

The military strategy employed by Henry imposed immense financial demands, through the establishment and maintenance of garrisons in both Scotland and France.⁷ The renewal of the war with France and Henry's ambitions for Scotland in 1544 more or less coincided with the appointment of Wriothesley as Lord Chancellor, by which time the financial state of the country was calamitous. In 1544, Wriothesley (with Richard Rich) took over control of the country's finances because of the absence in France of the Lord Treasurer, the duke of Norfolk.⁸ The commission of March 1544 authorised Wriothesley with Paulet, Rich and Southwell, not only to sell the king's lands, but also the stored lead from the roofs of ex-monastic property, and the sale of

⁴ *LP*, xvi, 372.

⁵ PRO, SP. 1/169, fos. 147-9, (*LP*, xvii, 188). The documents were issued on the basis that the lender 'has upon great and earnest considerations... advanced us in prest the sum of *n* sterling, we promise to repay it within two years'.

⁶ J. Rymer, *Foedera conventiones...* 17 vols. (London, 1727-29), xv, pp. 81-2.

⁷ 'Scotland was... an ally of questionable value to France throughout the war though it continued an irritant to the English', D. L. Potter, 'Diplomacy in the mid 16th century: England and France, 1536-1550', unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Cambridge, 1973, pp. 76-7.

⁸ PRO, SP. 1/189, fo. 164, (*LP*, xix, (2), 800 (27), xix, (1), 768, xix, (1), 630).

the benefits of wardship.⁹ No doubt Henry had encouraged Wriothesley to relinquish most of his judicial duties to concentrate on all these fiscal problems.

Demands and Responses

It was clear, even in May 1544, that there would be a huge financial burden from Henry's projected war against France in alliance with the emperor. One of the chancellor's first actions, to ensure strict control of finances, was to meet with the treasurers of all revenue institutions each Saturday to establish exactly where there were funds available, for 'the council's guidance on bestowing the king's treasure'.¹⁰

Throughout the remainder of 1544, Wriothesley was constantly engaged in trying to resolve the financial problems associated with a long drawn-out military campaign. Following the treaty of December 1543 between Henry and the emperor, in which they agreed a joint attack on France to commence by the end of June 1544, a great deal of forward planning was necessary. Henry was expecting to put 42,000 men into the field.¹¹ The war budget of £250,000 which Wriothesley had calculated, proved in the event to be a considerable under-estimate; the final cost was nearer £650,000. Out of a total income of £326,746, the sum of £153,386 was disbursed for war purposes in 1543-44, according to the accounts of the treasurer for

⁹ PRO, Patent Rolls, C.66. 736, m.32; *LP*, xix, (1), 278 (4), (5), (67).

¹⁰ Richard Rich had been chancellor of the court of Augmentations for eight years and had wide experience of the management of a very large staff of receivers and the handling and disbursement of the huge sums of money received into the coffers of the court. C. P. Cunich, 'Administration and alienation of ex-monastic lands by the crown, 1536-1547', unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1990, p. 203. The actual income of the court between 1536 and 1547 was £1,889,845, much more than other earlier studies have suggested. Cunich's thesis names the individual receivers and auditors for each of the areas covering England. W. C. Richardson, *History of the Court of Augmentations, 1536-1554* (Baton Rouge, 1961), p. 325, states that the figure was only £1,304,859. See also W. G. Hoskins, *The Age of Plunder: The England of Henry VIII, 1509-1547* (Harlow, 1976), p. 135. S. J. Gunn, *Early Tudor Government, 1485-1558* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 152-6.

¹¹ Dietz, *English Public Finance*, p. 152.

Augmentations. This compares with £13,475 out of a total disbursement of £152,350 which the treasurer showed in his accounts for 1545-6 as having been paid to Lord Chancellor Wriothesley in his capacity as 'treasurer for the wars'.¹²

Henry's ordinary annual income arose from two main sources, the revenues of the lands owned by the crown and the customs. These have been estimated at about £80,000 per annum in the latter years of Henry VII's reign, rising by the time of Elizabeth's accession to an annual sum of £160,000. Even that sum would not have been remotely enough to meet Henry VIII's normal commitments as well as the quite extraordinary financial demands of putting a large army of cavalry, foot (of which many were foreign mercenaries), and engineers into the field and making provision for them for an indeterminate period.¹³ Wriothesley's task was to make good the difference between the available income and what was likely to be required. The options open to him were several. He requested loans from the City of London, withdrew money from the Court of Augmentations, used the proceeds of sale of crown lands¹⁴, imposed forced loans upon wealthy bishops and the nobility, and negotiated massive loans from merchants in Antwerp, for the most part through the king's resident agent Stephen Vaughan.¹⁵ The crown plate was converted into currency, and

¹² Cunich, 'The administration and alienation of ex-monastic lands', pp. 49 and 98. The amount relative to the total receipts of £186,326 in 1545-6 was small. It is important to appreciate that other sums were expended on defence, the navy and fortifications from Augmentation receipts. Ibid, p. 99

¹³ G. W. Bernard, *The Power of the Early Tudor Nobility: A Study of the Fourth and Fifth Earls of Shrewsbury* (Brighton, 1985), p. 173; C. S. L. Davies, *Peace, Print and Protestantism, 1450-1558* (London, 1972), p. 319.

¹⁴ The authority given to Augmentations in May 1543 to sell crown lands to the yearly value of £10,000, was expressed to be 'for the relief of the king's great charges presently in hand for defence of the realm and subjects'. *LP*, xviii, (1), 623 (29), and other authority in March 1544 and May 1546 allowed Wriothesley as one of the commissioners to sell land subject to strict conditions and restrictions to raise money for the king to go to France in person and also 'noye, invade or defend the realm of Scotland, and the malice of the inhabitants, our natural enemies, to the which we have just and lawful right and title'. *LP*, xix, (1), 278 (5), and xxi, (1), 970 (14).

¹⁵ W. C. Richardson, *Stephen Vaughan, Financial Agent of Henry VIII. A Study of Financial Relations with the Low Countries* (Baton Rouge, 1952). Vaughan had been appointed resident ambassador in Flanders after 1539 after being engaged on embassy with Wriothesley to Brussels in

the coinage debased to increase the available hard cash.¹⁶ When full-scale debasement got under way in 1544 it was Wriothesley among others who calculated the potential advantages of the scheme, and it was he who controlled the operation through the years of fiscal difficulty between 1544 and 1546. There are suggestions that under Cromwell's direction, he had been experimenting with the idea since 1536.¹⁷ There is no doubt that in May 1544 Wriothesley prepared some calculations to show what the king would gain by steps taken to enhance the value of English gold and silver coinage made necessary by the speculation of merchants in England, who were transferring coin, in defiance of specific orders enforceable by customs officers, to France and Flanders where the value of that coin was higher and where profits were being made.¹⁸ The deliberate currency debasements of 1544-46 were intended to increase the supply of money by reducing the fineness of the coinage, and from this, of course, the crown benefited. It was implemented to provide sorely needed ready money and for no other reason; the debasements of earlier years had some economic justification but not in 1544.¹⁹ At the same time the sale of crown lands inevitably led to a reduction in the income which they had formerly generated. What could be seen as an indication of desperation was the suggestion in January 1545 that plate in the parish churches could be confiscated to provide yet more funds. The plan was not pursued in Henry's reign.²⁰

1538. He remained in Antwerp for the majority of his life, an essential link between Wriothesley and the Antwerp financiers, regularly in correspondence with the court.

¹⁶ Challis, *The Tudor Coinage*, pp. 248-55. 'The first clear evidence of debasement in Henry VIII's reign comes in fact in the 1530s'. p. 251.

¹⁷ PRO, SP. 1/187, fos. 127-34, (LP, xix, (1), 513 (5)); Challis, *The Tudor Coinage*, p. 84. Challis quotes R. De Roover, *Gresham on Foreign Exchange* (Cambridge, Mass. 1949), p. 51, 'in reward for his clever advice, he was elevated to the peerage as Baron Wriothesley... and became Lord Chancellor soon thereafter'.

¹⁸ PRO, SP. 1/187, fos. 127-34, (LP, xix, (1), 513 (5)).

¹⁹ Dietz, *English Public Finance*, pp. 174-7, for a review of the debasement of the coinage.

²⁰ PRO, SP. 1/197, fo. 11, (LP, xx, (1), 16), CSP, Scotland, vol. 8, no. 40, (LP, xx, (1). 1145).

As an inevitable consequence of the need to produce more coin, additional supplies of copper were needed, and Wriothesley arranged for these to be obtained from the continent in November 1545.²¹ The borrowing of money from the Mint by the crown, late in the same year, led to an acute shortage of ready coin, and this frustrating problem encouraged an attempt to bribe Wriothesley, as he told Paget.²² He may well not have been the only one to be approached.²³ Every available means of raising money had to be tried, and Wriothesley was diligent in investigating all possible avenues. In the event the net profits of debasement between 1544 and 1551 produced the staggering sum of £1,270,684.²⁴ It is improbable that the crown's financial demands could have been met had these steps not been taken.²⁵

It would be difficult to overestimate the contribution of Stephen Vaughan in helping to solve the king's urgent need of ready money. He had in earlier days been a clerk in Chancery and his contacts with Cromwell went back to 1529.²⁶ In August of that year he wrote 'to his right worshipful master Mr. Cromwell' from Antwerp, and the state papers are replete with letters which passed between him and Cromwell over the years and include a reference to him as 'Cromwell's man' in a report in January

²¹ PRO. SP. 1/209, fo. 207, (LP, xx, (2), 709).

²² *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 836. He suggested that the cofferer Sir Edmund Peckham, high treasurer of all the Mints, had been similarly approached for the same purpose. In any event such a situation indicates the influence that he and the lord chancellor were perceived to enjoy.

²³ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 835. Challis, *The Tudor Coinage*, pp. 92-3. 169n. PRO, SP. 1/210, fo. 43, (LP, xx, (2), 746).

²⁴ C. E. Challis, 'The debasement of the coinage 1542-1551', *EconHR*, 2nd series, 20, (1967), pp.452-3.

²⁵ F. C. Dietz, *English Government Finance*, (1921), p. 176; R. Schofield, 'Taxation and the Political limits of the Tudor State', in C. Cross, D. M. Loades, and J. J. Scarisbrick, (eds.), *Law and Government under the Tudors* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 227-55.

²⁶ William Petre had also been a clerk in Chancery at the same time as Vaughan, before he was appointed Master in 1536. They had extensive contacts on financial matters in later years. Emmison, *Tudor Minister*, p. 41. Vaughan had long been a convert to the reformist view, and in May 1531 Cromwell counselled caution following the hostile reception by Henry of a book written by Tyndale and sent to him by Vaughan; 'ye wilbe beware... and estew... any such opynyons whereby any sclaunder... might insue towards you...'. R. G. Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell* 2 vols. (Oxford, 1902), 1, no. 21.

1534 to the queen regent from her ambassador in London.²⁷ In February 1536 Cromwell wrote to Vaughan saying that he was 'surprised at the distrust you show of my old friendship', but any temporary sensitivity did not disturb their long association. Later the same month he wrote a reminder for his own use to send Stephen Vaughan back to Flanders.²⁸ That indeed is where he went shortly after and for the next few years Vaughan made his home there operating as Cromwell's financial agent. For most of Cromwell's career, Thomas Wriothesley was his confidential clerk and it is reasonable to assume that his close contacts with his 'master' brought him as closely into touch with all those others of Cromwell's servants who went hither and thither throughout England and the continent. In the late 1530's Vaughan more and more frequently addressed his letters and reports to Wriothesley personally rather than to Cromwell. His close contacts with the financial world of Antwerp gave him the entrée into the inner councils of the money lenders and despite all the difficulties, enabled him to secure for Henry funds at the lowest rate of interest that was available.²⁹ Over the years vast sums of money passed through his hands in every imaginable currency, some of which he found difficulty in converting into what could easily be used for the king's affairs.³⁰

As we have noted, foreign loans were by no means the only strategy employed. Wriothesley tried Wolsey's old device of 'benevolences', though with a great deal more success than his former mentor; the 1544-45 yield for example produced nearly

²⁷ *LP*, iv, (3), 5860; *LP*, ix, 121.

²⁸ PRO, SP. 1/102, fo. 5, (*LP*, x, 254), *LP*, x, 376.

²⁹ Richardson, *Stephen Vaughan*, pp. 51-3, 55, 65, 67, 71-3. Stephen Vaughan had been one of the two under-treasurers at the Mint but had never taken up his post because of the imperative need to have him in Antwerp, though he continued to receive the salary. Challis, *The Tudor Coinage*, p. 88.

³⁰ *LP*, xxi, (1), 1376.

£130,000.³¹ Wolsey's 'Amicable Grant' of 1525 had been a disastrous failure, and it says much for Wriothesley's organisational ability that he achieved so much.³² There was much hostility to making the payment from the high and low, and not everyone was prepared to make his contribution. In January 1545 Wriothesley sat at Baynards Castle as a commissioner with Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk and other members of the council, to enforce payment of the benevolence. They condemned Richard Read, an alderman of London who had refused to pay, on pain of death to go to fight for the king in Scotland, where he was rumoured to have died.³³ In fact he survived and the privy council in December 1545 on the application of his wife, approved arrangements for his exchange for a Scottish prisoner of war, one Patrick Hume.³⁴ One of the conditions was that Read's wife had to pay a sum to the king, perhaps equal to the amount of the benevolence that her husband had earlier refused to contribute. Despite back-sliders such as Richard Read, Henry's euphemistic statement that 'our people... be of so lovyng and kynde disposition towardes us' that 'they will as gladly contribute by way of benevolence that which for the necessite of th'affayre shalbe requisite as yf the same wear graunted by Parliament', proved in the event not to be too far wide of the mark so far as the financial return was concerned.³⁵ The huge extent of the problems were obvious to many; Thomas Hussey wrote to the earl of Surrey in November 1545 that 'the kinges majestie is indetid at this [time] four hundred thowsand markes, to the levyng whereof other by sowhsedy and other practises at this

³¹ PRO, E, 34/4/86, (LP, xix, (1), 368); SP. 1/197, fo. 17-9, (LP, xx, (1), 17), LP, xx, (1), 52, 125 (5), App. 4 (3)).

³² Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal*, pp. 401-6.

³³ LP, xx, (1), 98; Wriothesley, i, p. 151. The note to this reference records that 'Alderman Reed was taken prisoner by the Scots in the very first engagement, and was made to pay a heavy ransom'.

Greyfriars Chronicle, p. 48. Holinshed, *Chronicle*, iii, p. 847.

³⁴ APC, 1542-47, p. 284.

³⁵ PRO, SP. 1/197, fos. 17-9, (LP, xx, (1), 17).

Parlyament there is nott to be resaived above CC thowsand poundes'.³⁶ In June 1545 there was still outstanding the last instalment of the king's earlier subsidy and Wriothesley with other members of the council met in the Guildhall, London, to direct the aldermen of the city as to the arrangements they had to make to secure immediate payment of the overdue sums.³⁷ In mid 1546 Wriothesley was trying frantically to collect debts due to the crown; 'our dayly travail is with such as appeare here for the Kinges Majesties debtes, and we send owte lettres in great nombre for more debtors... As for money all the shift shalbe made that is possible, but yet the store is very small. The contribution cometh very slowly in... the mynt is drawen drye'.³⁸ In September 1546 the privy council wrote to the king's secretary a letter reporting on a variety of matters but including a lengthy explanation about the shortage of funds for the king's household which had come to it from 'Mr. Coferer'.³⁹ Henry's practice of using the 'benevolence' to subsidise one-off events was later adopted to raise funds to finance the cost of the coronation of Edward, when the unfortunate citizens of London were 'levied' for a 'xvth and a half' in February 1547.⁴⁰ We do not know how much opposition this generated, but perhaps in the euphoria of the crowning of a new and young king the hostility which usually accompanied such penal impositions, did not develop to any alarming extent.

The War Chest

In July 1544 Henry demanded that funds be garnered to fill a war chest for his invasion of France and Scotland from which coin could be drawn as and when

³⁶ PRO, SP. 1/210, fo. 30, (*LP*, xx, (2), 738).

³⁷ Wriothesley, i, p. 155.

³⁸ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 854; (*LP*, xxi, (2), 19).

³⁹ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 878.

⁴⁰ Wriothesley, i, p. 182.

required. As we have already noted,⁴¹ when the king departed for France to take personal charge of the French campaign, Wriothesley and other members of the council whose experience in financial matters was useful, were deputed to assist the regent Catherine and were given the task of paying the army and providing the necessary supplies.⁴² The appointment specifically provided that either the Lord Chancellor or Hertford or both 'shall ever be present at court' and that in the event that neither was available, Cranmer was to substitute for them. That showed clearly enough that Henry was committing the regency council to a religiously balanced group of councillors. The French war lasted until July 1546 and the conflict with the Scots a little longer. The financial consequences of these two expeditions were disastrous.

Henry's experience in France was neither enjoyable nor particularly successful and in his uncertain state of health he struggled to come anywhere near achieving his objectives. When a projected advance on Paris in conjunction with the emperor had been discussed in the early months of 1544, Wriothesley prepared in his own hand a detailed 'estimate for the wages of the whole army, with all things necessary for the same, for three months' and calculated that the cost would total the enormous sum of £250,000.⁴³ Of the money required only £135,000 was certainly available, £50,000 would have to be borrowed abroad and £40,000 realised from the sale of lands, and the residual sum obtained when and where possible. Unhappily the war turned into a siege of Boulogne, and proved to be a much more expensive operation (as sieges notoriously were) than had been expected. Huge financial strains were caused by the investment and holding of Boulogne and were likely to become even worse.

⁴¹ See page 131 above.

⁴² *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 763-5, (*LP*, xix, (1), 864).

⁴³ PRO, SP, 1/184, fo. 52, (*LP*, xix, (1), 272).

Charles justified abandoning his joint operation with Henry and making peace with France by blaming his ally's breach of faith, to which Henry replied with counter-allegations.⁴⁴ Both were equally responsible; neither had made any really determined effort to carry out the commitment they had entered into, while Henry continued raids into Scotland from the Border on a small scale, compromising his French campaign. England was effectively bankrupt. To make matters much worse, there was serious alarm at the possibility that the French would make a strike at the north of England with troops released by the peace they had made with Charles. They might land an army in Scotland and with the local forces there, invade England from the north and across the Channel.⁴⁵ There was very real apprehension of French intervention along the south coast of England, and Wriothesley and the council had to make provision accordingly. Wriothesley's property interests and his offices as constable of Southampton and Christchurch castles, added another dimension to his conciliar involvement. No doubt in anticipation of an invasion of the south coast, Wriothesley with some others had been appointed as a commissioner of array for Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, and Wiltshire in April 1545.⁴⁶ The proposed grand assault of England by the French in 1545 would have been supported by 50,000 men disposed about Le Havre, and the 3,000 men who had entered Scotland near the Clyde to add strength to an attack by the Scots.

To confirm the anxieties Lord St. Leger had written to Wriothesley from Ireland in February 1545, warning him of strong rumours of an anticipated Scottish invasion.⁴⁷ The warning could not be ignored as the Scots army had taken much

⁴⁴ Charles signed the Treaty of Cr py with the French in mid-September 1544 just as Henry secured Boulogne.

⁴⁵ P. S. Crowson, *Tudor Foreign Policy* (London, 1973), p. 129.

⁴⁶ Rymer, *Foedera conventiones...* vol. xv, p. 83.

⁴⁷ *CSP, Ireland, 1509-1573*, p. 70.

encouragement from its victory at Ancrum Moor in February 1545, their first significant success for years, and gave every sign of intending to resume hostilities. Continuing threats from Scotland were a thorn in Henry's side and in the hope of keeping the Scots neutral in the projected war with France, Wriothesley with the help of Suffolk and Paget negotiated an agreement with the earl of Lennox, whose authority was much circumscribed by the political situation in Scotland.⁴⁸ John Ovedale had reported to Wriothesley from north of the border in May 1544 on the need for funds 'for the king's royal army at Scotland', but much more serious and potentially catastrophic were Stephen Vaughan's problems in negotiating a loan of 100,000 crowns, (about £25,000), from money lenders in Antwerp, who demanded interest at 14 per cent, and repayment of the whole loan with interest by mid February 1545. So short was ready money that Vaughan was given the additional task of negotiating the exchange of English lead for Spanish alum, thereby avoiding the need for a cash transaction.⁴⁹ Many difficulties arose over the Antwerp loan and several letters from Vaughan during June 1544 highlighted the nature of the obstacles, and reported that there was no suitable coinage available; they had 'crowns, crusados, dalers, keyzers, gilderns, and Italian crowns' and other moneys, but not what he needed. It was only in January 1546 that Vaughan was able to tell Wriothesley that nearly 5000 crowns were on their way to Calais.

The pressures to generate funds presumably gave birth to a letter of August 1544 which appears as a draft in the state papers, intended to be sent upon Henry's orders, in which he wrote that 'he is bold of such of his loving subjects as he knows

⁴⁸ When Henry and the emperor Charles had agreed on the attack on France in late 1543, it was thought, wrongly as it turned out, that the Scottish threat had been neutralised by the arrangements made by them through the earl of Arran and the treaties of Greenwich. See Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, pp. 441-5 for a full discussion of the difficulties with which Henry was faced.

⁴⁹ PRO, SP. 1/203, fo. 142, 1/204, fos. 82 and 123-5, (LP, xx, (1), 1143, 1239, 1265).

will press themselves to satisfy his desire... he requires him to lend the sum of -----
(blank)'. There follows a list of names of the lords temporal (with Wriothesley heading it), and the lords spiritual, as well as deans, chaplains and archdeacons, with a suggestion that all those included in the two former groups should each contribute £1000.⁵⁰ It is unlikely that the letter was ever sent as hostilities temporarily ceased in September but the draft demonstrates the lengths to which Henry was prepared to go to satisfy the monetary demands of a continental war. What however is more clear is that Henry wrote to all his bishops asking them for a 'loan', and among the recipients of his request was the bishop of Bath and Wells who was invited to contribute £3000, an invitation he resisted pleading that he did not have the funds to meet such a demand. Wriothesley was at the back of this proposal, and although the bishop ultimately found what was demanded, he did so with bad grace.⁵¹ The financial obstacles were ultimately surmounted, but it was a time of great anxiety of which Wriothesley bore more than his share.⁵² Ultimately the time came for examining the use to which these enormous sums had been put, and in mid October Rich wrote to Wriothesley, St. John and Cranmer, acting as the king's commissioners, to explain in detail how he had disbursed £65,350 which had come into his hands since the previous month. In the same month Anthony Knyvett sent Wriothesley a friendly letter justifying his expenditure of £900 in Portsmouth and thanking him for 'both good cheer and the hunting at Tytchefelde and other parks', which the Lord Chancellor had allowed him to enjoy while he was in the area of his home.⁵³ At the same time he was required with

⁵⁰ PRO, SP. 1/190, fos. 241-9, (LP, xix, (1), 1032).

⁵¹ P. M. Hembry, *Bishops of Bath and Wells, 1540-1640; Social and Economic Problems* (London 1967), pp. 75-6. PRO, SP. 1/191, fos. 139, 231, (LP, xix, (2), 114, 171).

⁵² LP, xix, (1), 470: PRO, SP. 1/188, fos. 57, 197, 215, (LP, xix (1), 630, 725, 733, 768).

⁵³ PRO, SP. 1/192, fo. 30, 1/193, fo. 78, (LP, xix, (2), 192, 385).

Robert Southwell to take an account of the financial affairs in Flanders and investigate a payment of £2000 made to Ralph Warner, John Gresham and others.⁵⁴

Despite the all-absorbing responsibility of operating as the king's financial expert, Wriothesley still found the opportunity to look after his own property interests and be aware of the interests of suitors.⁵⁵ To round off this extraordinarily busy and anxious year Wriothesley welcomed the emperor's new ambassador, Francis Van der Delft who arrived in England in the middle of December to replace the respected and experienced Eustace Chapuys, to whose unremitting and enthusiastic reporting we know so much about the course of events in England as they were perceived by that astute observer.⁵⁶

Wriothesley and Paget and the Strains of War

Between the latter part of 1544 and 1547 Wriothesley and Paget operated as an ex-officio committee on finance. Tied to Westminster by the limited judicial duties that he had chosen to retain, Wriothesley directed the London transactions including the supervision of the mint, and the transferring of coin from the Low Countries to England,⁵⁷ leaving Paget free to move rather more widely in search of ways of financing the military demands of the king and his generals. The earlier process of squeezing money from the bishops, obtaining loans in Antwerp, selling crown lands, and debasing the coinage would no longer meet the demands of ruinous wars. The disastrous shortage of ready cash resulted in further debasement of the coinage, the dissolution of secular colleges and the seizure of their assets, the sale of lead taken

⁵⁴ PRO, Patent Rolls, C.66, 747, m.14; *LP*, xix, (1) 1035 (27).

⁵⁵ PRO, SP. 1/194, fo. 200, (*LP*, xix, (2), 532).

⁵⁶ PRO, SP. 1/195, fo. 204, (*LP*, xix, (2), 723).

⁵⁷ PRO, SP. 1/197, fo. 121, (*LP*, xx, (1), 75), SP. 1/199, fo. 26, (*LP*, xx, (1), 358); SP. 1/208, fo. 78, (*LP*, xx, (2), 453).

from the roofs of churches, which yielded a remarkably high figure, the demand for 'benevolences', forced loans and heavy subsidies, both lay and clerical. Every expedient was tried to meet what on any view was a grave national crisis.⁵⁸ In the end the difficulties became less acute following a peace treaty signed with the French at the beginning of June 1546. It resulted from strenuous negotiations conducted on the English side by Hertford, Dudley and Paget, a trio of privy councillors with reformist inclinations, whose authority and influence with Henry increased dramatically from that time onward.⁵⁹

Throughout August, September and October 1545 letters passed almost daily between Wriothesley and Paget. For the most part they concerned the continuing desperate shortage of money to provide for the king's army, and sometimes were phrased in terms of considerable irritation. In late August Wriothesley told Paget that if he had been as careful in saving money as others had been in gathering it there would have been a surplus available to Henry, but they had 'swept the house here clean'.⁶⁰ The anxiety of all these problems led to an illness which resulted in Wriothesley asking the privy council to excuse his absence from their meetings. It appears the problem was only temporary, because within a few days he wrote again to Paget advising that some part of the money despatched for the payment of the costs of the French campaign should be sent by road in separate wagons from Flanders to Calais, as he

⁵⁸ F. C. Dietz, *English Public Finance, 1485-1641*, vol. 1 *English Government Finance, 1485-1558* (Urbano, 1921) 2nd. ed.; PRO, SP. 1/206, fo. 224; 1/207, fo. 26; 1/207, fo. 66; 1/208, fo. 47. There is a very large number of references in the state papers regarding the continuing problems of finance, including PRO, SP. 1/207, fo. 64, 1/208, fos. 47, 78, 1/209, fo. 207, 1/210, fos. 43, 72, (LP, xx, (2), 212-3, 222, 231, 268, 272, 302, 358, 425, 453, 472, 697, 709, 713, 729, 746, 752, 769).

⁵⁹ The blow by blow moves in this protracted exercise are comprehensively covered in the state papers. PRO, SP. 1/217, fos. 16-20, 184, SP. 1/218, fo. 166, SP. 1/219, fos. 18, 80-2, 146, SP. 1/220, fos. 1, 19, (LP, xxi, (1), 515, 550, 610, 749, 849, 877, 926-7, 974, 989, 995, 1007).

⁶⁰ PRO, SP. 1/206, fo. 224, (LP, xx, (2), 212). See also many letters from Paget to Wriothesley from 25 August to 8 November 1545, LP, xx, (2), 222, 231, 241, 268, 272, 302, 324, 354 (to the privy council), 425, 453, 472, 473, 697, 709, 713, 729, 746, 752.

thought that this would be safer than committing it to a sea journey with the vagaries of wind and tide and the risks of piracy.⁶¹ On 14 September 1545 Wriothesley wrote a long letter to Paget advising him that Henry had spent £1,300,000 in 1544 and 1545, that the subsidy and benevolence had only netted £300,000, that lands had been 'consumed', and the plate of the realm turned into coin. He lamented 'of the time to come... and yet you write to me still pay, pay, prepare for this and for that'. He thought that the privy council, who had been a party to all that had been done, should themselves take time to consider how they were to manage with the current state of affairs rather than leave it all to him to deal with.⁶² There followed a month's gap in the correspondence between Wriothesley and Paget, and indeed there are no identified letters from the Lord Chancellor on any subject until the end of October, when they began again, still bewailing the parlous financial situation. And so the process continued with very little relief.⁶³ Wriothesley became more and more depressed by the financial difficulties with which he had to grapple, and Paget increasingly irritable over the failure of the money supply, to the point that Wriothesley told him 'God help us; for, for my part, it maketh me weary of life'.⁶⁴

In a letter to the privy council in September 1545, the Lord Chancellor lamented the enormous costs that had been incurred and expressed the gravest doubts over the country's ability to repay foreign loans, and despaired at the necessity of coining of money from plate and the sale of lands, which together would not be

⁶¹ PRO, SP. 1/207, fos. 26, 55, (LP, xx, (2), 237, 262). Wriothesley had been 'sore visited with that malady'.

⁶² *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 830-1, (LP, xx, (2), 366).

⁶³ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 835-6; The mayor of London complained to Wriothesley of the lack of flour and meal which was likely to lead to 'greater dearthe then were expedient'. PRO, SP. 1/210, fo. 43, (LP, xx, (2), 769).

⁶⁴ PRO, SP. 1/206, fo. 224, 1/208, fo. 47, (LP, xx, (2), 212, 453).

sufficient to clear the country's debts.⁶⁵ Henry's army in France was in immediate need of money and Wriothesley told Paget that he could not raise it, and he in turn had the unenviable task of reporting that information to the king. In response to an angry letter from Paget, Wriothesley told him that 'touching the Mynt we be nowe so ferr out with it, that, and you take any peny more from it thise three monethes... you shall utterly destroye the trade of it, and men shal clerly withdrawe their reasorte thither'. He went on to say 'I assure you, Master Secretary, I am at my wittes ende, howe we shal possibly shift for thre monethes folowing, and specially for the two next. For I see not any greate likelihood that any good summe will comm in, tyl after Christmas...' In concluding this letter of November 1545 he said 'yet some think [me] too sore in this matter; but if [I] have offended any it is in the king's service. God is my judge, I wold I, and all myn, were bounde to drynk water twies in a weke, whilles we lyved, uppon condition that his majestie might compasse all thinges to his hartes ease'.⁶⁶

Wriothesley was at the very centre of this financial problem, and in the autumn of 1545 he was beginning to feel the pressure. Paget wrote to him frequently upon the difficulties he was encountering with Henry in France, and in response he was told rather testily; 'I would you felt a piece of the care and I wene you would not write so often as you do, knowing the state of things as I... You bid me run as though I could make money'.⁶⁷ Relationships in November 1545 were about at breaking point and angry feelings in letters of bitter complaint and recrimination were only soothed by an apology from Wriothesley, ('I shalbe alwayes towardses you and yours of most freendly disposition'), and the enlistment of lady Paget's help to smooth over the rupture.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 830-1, (*LP*, xx, (2), 366).

⁶⁶ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 839-40.

⁶⁷ PRO, SP. 1/210, fo. 43, (*LP*, xx, (2), 746).

⁶⁸ PRO, SP. 1/206, fo. 224; *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 838: (*LP*, xx, (2), 212, 453, 746, 752).

During this period when Wriothesley was wholly absorbed with his worries over the money supply he wrote frequently to William Paget, and the state papers show very few letters from him to other correspondents. In November 1545, Gardiner also echoed the general despair in a letter to Paget because he saw England as friendless and engaged in a costly war which could only be concluded by a dishonourable peace.⁶⁹ But he had no solution to offer.

By 1545 the financial credit of the English crown abroad was poor, as Stephen Vaughan repeatedly reported in his letters from Antwerp, and the constant demands of the king with the army in France for more money caused Wriothesley unending problems. The substantial financial benefits of the dissolution of the monasteries, though they should have been a great deal larger than they were, had long since been dissipated on the battlefields and there was very little room for manoeuvre except by a wide-ranging reform of the financial system. Temporary expedients and the former areas of attack were no longer adequate; the dioceses could not continue to bear the demands for further funds indefinitely, bankers were sceptical about the prospects of repayment, and the sale of crown lands had mostly come to an end. Even the debasement of the coinage could not now bridge the gap between need and availability.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ J. A. Muller, *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner* (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 185 ff and 198 ff. It was in this letter that Gardiner recalled the acting of Paget, Wriothesley and himself, in Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus* and observed that they could not then solve their problems so easily. PRO, SP. 1/210, fo. 127, (LP, xx, (2), 788). See page 12 above.

⁷⁰ Cunich, 'Administration and alienation of ex-monastic lands', provides a complete financial analysis of the first court of Augmentations, and calls into question some of the assessments and calculations of Dietz, Gasquest and Richardson. Table 2, (xxx) p. 99, for example shows that the court between 1541-46 made war payments totalling £235,242. In addition over the same period the navy received £46,862 and £121,862 was spent on home defence. The total of £403,966 represents 35% of the total income of the court of Augmentations of £1,146,022 over the same period received from the treasurers and receivers and whether generated by recurrent income or income from the proceeds of the sale of ex-monastic land. p. 48. In addition Augmentations provided £200,000 for annuities, pensions and stipends to former religious between 1536-42. For the whole period of 1536-

The serious under-estimates of the cost of financing the wars against Scotland and the continental powers by the generals in charge and others including Wriothesley, made any assessment no better than guess-work, especially when the expectation of quick results in the field on which the figures were predicated, proved illusory. Every means of fund raising was tried. Paget canvassed the possibility of confiscating debts due to English merchants in the Low Countries,⁷¹ while Wriothesley did what he could to squeeze more from clerical sources including the bishop of Bath and Wells, whose reluctant contribution was imitated by other donors, with equal reluctance no doubt.⁷²

Some years later Daniel Barbaro wrote a very lengthy 'Report on England' delivered to the Venetian Senate in May 1551, in which he commented upon every aspect of life in England, including the political, religious, judicial, social, educational, financial, and Parliamentary features. In the course of it he noted the sums of money levied by Henry by various means for his campaign in France, such as securing 'the estates of noblemen beheaded', extortion from his subjects by imposing a 'benevolence', and the sale of property, which generated in all 20,340,000 ducats, and of that sum spent on 'battering, taking and keeping Boulogne', 600,000 ducats, as he had been 'informed by the lord chancellor (Wriothesley)'.⁷³ No one would be in a better position to know the truth than Wriothesley. He would no doubt also have been aware that the 1545 benevolence raised the sum of £65,061 from the English counties (excluding Yorkshire), and London, and would have appreciated that this was but a modest return.⁷⁴

47, £174,947 went into the privy coffers, the sum of £141,304 to the royal household and £126,683 for the 'King's works'.

⁷¹ PRO, SP. 1/192, fo. 58, 1/195, fo. 233, (*LP*, xix, (2), 212, 751). Henry asked the bishop of Bath and Wells for a loan of £3,000 but obtained a great deal less.

⁷² Gammon, *Statesman and Schemer*, p. 74; *LP*, xix, (2), 212, 751.

⁷³ *CSP, Venice*, v, 1534-54, pp. 338-62.

⁷⁴ Hoskins, *The Age of Plunder*, p. 245.

The registers of the Acts of the Privy Council are full of directions for 'warrants for payment'. One of Paget's contacts was Nicasius Yetsweirt, who having attended upon Wriothesley, reported to Paget in September 1546 that 'my Lord Chauncelour told me, laughing, that they wer very drye... he willed me to cause one tattende upon him, and would do what might be don, for your satisfaction'.⁷⁵ Despite this successful conclusion, Wriothesley wrote to the council, 'I lament the danger of the time to come'.⁷⁶ He had cause to be worried; the exhaustion of the money supply led to Henry's seeking loans in Antwerp which stored up immense problems for his successors. In September 1546 writing to Paget from his home at Ely Place, Wriothesley spoke somewhat wearily about Paget's letters 'with this sudden change from peace to war', but said that he had 'cast away care and will serve that state whatsoever it bring... I fear not, but the end shall be good'.⁷⁷ Within days he wrote again to Paget reminding him that in the following February £20,000 had to be repaid; 'you know the importance of this matter of money and how slowly it comes in', but happily nearly £6000 was repaid the same day.⁷⁸ But much more cheerful news was on the way for the harassed chancellor when he heard from Vaughan at Antwerp that there had arrived the 'French king's money' being the pension for Henry for one term, in the sum of 47,368 crowns in part settlement of the outstanding 1,894,736 crowns. In addition a further sum of 500 crowns was received having been paid for salt in accordance with 'the treaty for perpetual peace', and there was also information of the finding of gold at Crauford Mosse in December, though Lord Wharton thought that it would be uneconomic to extract it.⁷⁹ Any possibility of finding additional sources of

⁷⁵ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 869.

⁷⁶ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 831.

⁷⁷ PRO, SP. 1/224, fo. 51, (*LP*, xxi, (2), 28).

⁷⁸ PRO, SP. 1/225, fos. 66, and 71, (*LP*, xxi, (2), 172, 177).

⁷⁹ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 5, 574; (*LP*, xxi, (2), 336, 481).

money was being considered. Overarching all these problems were the convoluted negotiations of the king with the German Protestants, his shadow boxing with the French, his apprehensions of Charles' intentions against the German heretics and concerns about a possible Catholic attack on England.⁸⁰ Contemporaneous discussions with an embassy from Germany and attempts to reactivate the alliance with Charles against France coincided with plans for yet another invasion of Scotland. Paget was talking in early January 1547 of a defensive league with the Germans if France would likewise join!⁸¹ Wriothesley's role in all that would have been critical. His skill in money management was without peer in the council and only Henry's death (though not unexpected) brought all the plans to an abrupt halt.

Conclusion

It hardly needs to be said that Wriothesley as Lord Chancellor was inevitably drawn to a greater or lesser degree into the religious and political turmoils of the years between 1544 and 1547, but consideration of those matters belongs to the next two chapters. Although he devoted some attention to judicial issues in his courts of Chancery and Star Chamber, Wriothesley registered his most important achievements in the field of finance working with Paget as an informal sub-committee of the privy council, during the French and Scottish wars.⁸² It has been calculated that nearly fifty per cent of the total available resources of the country were used to finance those wars, and any man who could deliver this sort of money (and Wriothesley and Rich

⁸⁰ The appointment of the long-time advocate and supporter of religious reform, Edward Vaughan, as captain of Portsmouth in January 1547, might be significant as an indication of the importance of having a known reliable man in the post in those doubtful times.

⁸¹ *LP*, xxi, (2), 743.

⁸² Slavin, 'Lord Chancellor Wriothesley and Reform of Augmentations: New Light on an Old Court', pp. 50-2.

came nearest to doing so), was going to be important.⁸³ The fact that recent research by P. A. Cunich has shown that nearer 35% of the total Augmentations income was used over the years for war purposes does not invalidate the argument.⁸⁴

It is symptomatic of the neglect suffered by Thomas Wriothesley at the hands of historians that virtually the only events that they recognise and record during his three years as Lord Chancellor are the racking of Anne Askew, the attempted arrest of Katherine Parr and the botched efforts to have George Blagge burnt for heresy, all of which are discussed below.

Outside his involvement in the realms of religion and politics, the hard evidence of the importance of Wriothesley through the period of his chancellorship is fully documented in the state papers of England and Spain, and the records of the hearings of the Chancery court and the court of Star Chamber. Though much of the material shows him at work on the routine of state business, and is therefore of limited interest to many historians, it is clear that he filled effectively the role that Henry had selected for him as Lord Chancellor in all its various ramifications. He presided over the privy council, the House of Lords, took a leading part in discussions with foreign emissaries, and acted as the principal adviser in all the many fields in which legal expertise was needed. Above all he demonstrated considerable energy, resourcefulness and ingenuity in attempting to meet the financial demands of his king. The clarity of his thinking and expression shines out through his correspondence especially that with William Paget, and in short he emerges as an able, conscientious, and committed servant of the crown.

⁸³ D. Hoak, 'The Secret History of the Tudor Court: The King's Coffers and the King's Purse, 1542-1553', *JBS*, 26 (1987), pp. 209-231.

⁸⁴ Between 1536 and 1547, payments were made by the court of Augmentations for the king's works of £62,282 towards the cost of coastal fortifications, £20,537 to Calais and Guines, and £6,464 to Boulogne. The sums exclude money spent on defence of the realm. Cunich, 'administration and alienation of ex-monastic lands', p. 93.



Tho^s Lord Wriothesly.

afterwards Earl of Southampton.

From an Original in the Possession of M^r Clarke.

1540. Thomas Wriothesley

1546. John Wriothesley

*Photographs from the Originals in the Possession of
John Thane*

6. Politics and Religion, 1544-1547

Introduction

Until April 1540 Wriothesley's position was primarily that of a servant carrying out the tasks allotted to him by Cromwell, dealing with those of different religious persuasions and differing political agendas. He remained at the centre of all that happened in council after surviving what might have been the end of his career in late 1540. He acted as the king's mouthpiece to the country at large, distributing orders, managing affairs at the highest level of state, but still essentially dependent upon instructions from Henry. He routinely attended meetings of the privy council which contained members of both conservative and evangelical factions. He worked with both, disseminating Henry's wishes with impartiality while avoiding, as far as was practicable and as a matter of simple necessity, the battles which bedevilled the religious issues. There is no evidence that he attached himself firmly to any party during his four years as secretary, but we will argue that as the 1540s progressed he increasingly he found that the conservative faction matched his own temperament and his close association with Stephen Gardiner.

On his appointment as chancellor Wriothesley's new office and status took him directly into the midst of the political and religious turmoils as a participant, and he had to find his place either among the reformers or the conservative faction. As the reign began to draw to a close a neutral posture was not an option. His elevated status, apart from the authority and obligations which went with his office and the impact of the Act of Precedence,¹ forced him to take sides on religious and political issues, and

¹ 31 Henry VIII, c. 10.

from what was formerly a reactive stance he became increasingly and necessarily proactive.

Religious reforms had brought many unexpected consequences and unlooked-for mischiefs in its wake. No doubt like Gardiner, Bonner and Norfolk, Wriothesley considered that reform had gone far enough or perhaps too far, and that further reforms had to be stopped at whatever cost, whoever might be implicated as a result. To restore the country to orthodoxy would require the permanent defeat of the evangelicals at court and that was the conservatives' aim. The reformist challenge to the fundamental tenets of the church had to be suppressed, and Wriothesley took a hand in that work. As Susan Brigden puts it succinctly, 'when one faith was evangelical... and the other rested upon authority... there could hardly be peace'.² By spring 1546 it was clear that Henry's life expectancy was short and that whichever party controlled the council at his death would also control the king and the council in the next reign. That fact determined the manoeuvres of both factions in the last six months of that year, and Wriothesley's role was an essential element of the conservatives' strategy. An examination of his part in all the intricate and sometimes obscure political actions of the years between 1544 and 1547 is the purpose of this chapter.

Wriothesley and the Factions of the mid 1540s

The fall of Cromwell and the post-Cromwellian investigations into heretical activities, had persuaded Wriothesley that his own survival and future career had to be linked to the Henrician version of religious orthodoxy. Wriothesley's earlier flirtations

² S. Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1989), p. 3.

with humanism and his obedient acceptance of Cromwell's reformist plans and actions, had given way to an attitude which, as Henry's principal secretary, reflected the king's views. About the time of his appointment as secretary he rejoined his old master Gardiner.³

There was in the minds of many a great fear that the slackening of the tight rein of religious discipline brought about by the introduction of Bibles in English, the dissolution of the monasteries, and the destruction of images with royal approval, was an invitation to disorder. Experiences in London in the years after 1536 caused the gravest alarm to those who foresaw that a wave of subversion and unrest would arise from the religious changes and the consequential release from old constraints.⁴ The reformation had gone too far, bringing unrest and disturbances in its wake. Bonner for one, was grieved that Bibles in English had been authorised, and sent John Porter to Newgate for reading it to listeners in Paul's church.⁵ Gardiner shared those views.⁶ In the late 1530s Bonner had been a 'gospeller' and was not only favoured by Cromwell, 'but by him was advanced... to the bishopric of Hereford and lastly to the bishopric of London'.⁷ But the fall of Cromwell altered everything and the responsibility imposed by Henry upon Bonner in 1541 to implement the Six Articles changed him from one ostensibly sympathetic to reform, to as vigorous a pursuer of heretics as could be found.⁸ Wriothesley seems to have followed the same path. Concern for the

³ J. A. Muller, *Stephen Gardiner and the Tudor Reaction* (London, 1926), p. 89; *LP*, xv, 429. See Foxe, v. 151, 160, 412. *LP*, xvi, 640.

⁴ Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 306, 312, 317, for example; S. Brigden, 'Popular Disturbance and the Fall of Thomas Cromwell and the Reformers 1539-40', *HJ*, 24, 2 (1981), pp. 257-78, and at pp. 258, 260. Gardiner had the same concerns as Wriothesley; G. Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic, The Life of Stephen Gardiner* (Oxford 1990), pp. 158, 191.

⁵ Foxe, v. 452. Porter died there in chains. Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 339.

⁶ L. B. Smith, *Tudor Prelates and Politics 1536-1558* (Princeton, 1953), p. 245; S. E. Lehmborg, *The Later Parliaments of Henry VIII, 1536-1547* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 163

⁷ Foxe, v. 151, 160.

⁸ Foxe, v. 440, 441, 'Bonner... began eftsoons to put in execution his authority after a rigorous sort'.

maintenance of discipline and order could well have been a factor in Wriothesley's attitude to doctrinal reform. But what is the hard independent evidence that Wriothesley's religious affiliation moved firmly towards the orthodox from 1540 onwards?

To follow that process it is necessary to review earlier years. It was a far cry from the days in September 1538 when Wriothesley wrote so critically of Gardiner on his return in great splendence from a visit to the emperor.⁹ Wriothesley was then a 'satellite' of Cromwell and both he and Bonner, to support the continuing battle for supremacy, were required to look for evidence to undermine Gardiner's authority and influence.¹⁰ It is impossible to say if his heart was in it, but it is not surprising that in the late 1530s some believed that Wriothesley was sympathetic to reform. In 1537 he was asked to 'defend the true preachers of gode word from... suche ungodly people as thys [Thomas] Bell' thought to be an Anabaptist.¹¹ As we have seen in June of the same year Edward Bacheler wrote to him from St. John's College, Cambridge, of his great indebtedness to him for pulling him 'owt off the blynd darknis off ower old and superstycyus relygyon'.¹² These comments may be only a reflection of his relationship to his patron Cromwell, and it could be more significant that an expelled Oxford scholar named Deimcy, of reformist views, 'serves the lord Wriothesley teaching his children'.¹³ He also played a role in the publication of the mildly-reformist *Institution of a Christen Man*, (the Bishop's Book) of 1537.¹⁴ Thomas Starkey's anxiety to clear

⁹ PRO, SP. 1/123, fo. 216, (LP, xii, (2), 442); Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 79. *St P of Henry VIII*, vol. 8, 51.

¹⁰ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 550; LP, xiii, (2), 270, 401, Foxe, v. 154, and vi. 66.

¹¹ PRO, SP. 1/117, fo. 265; (LP, xii, (1), 831).

¹² PRO, SP. 1/121, fo. 28, (LP, xii, (2), 95).

¹³ J. G. Nicholls, (ed.), *Narratives of the Reformation*, Camden Society (1859), p. 34.

¹⁴ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 555; LP, xii, (2), 289, 330. Wriothesley is mentioned in two letters from Edward Fox, bishop of Hereford to Cromwell in July 1537, not only it appears as the one charged with having the book printed by Thomas Berthelet, the king's printer, but in Fox's words to

himself of suspicions of papist leanings led him to write to Wriothesley in 1536 to seek his support, not because he anticipated sympathy for his views, but because Starkey had 'a certayn and sure trust in your gentyl stomake and lovyng famylyaryte'.¹⁵ All these examples however are but straws in the wind; they do not prove Wriothesley to have been temperamentally inclined to reformist religious views, and the examples may tell us no more than that as secretary to Cromwell he followed his master. As we have seen, in April 1538 Dr. Price, priest from Llanderfel in North Wales wrote to Wriothesley (unavailingly), asking his help in restoring the statue of Dderfel Gadarn removed from its place in his church.¹⁶ Twelve months later John Kingsmill reported to Cromwell that Wriothesley disapproved of the 'hummynge, hacking, and dark setting furthe of gode word'.¹⁷ Nor does Wriothesley's enthusiastic support for the monastic dissolution and the destruction of images say any more about his religious opinions than that he carried out of the commands of his king. Gardiner did as much in his own locality around Winchester.

The conclusion in February 1543 of a treaty between England and the Empire, negotiated by Gardiner and Wriothesley as a mutually defensive and offensive pact directed towards France, helped materially to reduce pressure from abroad and provided greater opportunity to deal with domestic issues.¹⁸ It was a considerable diplomatic triumph for Gardiner. The temporary resolution of matters abroad opened the way to dealing with religious affairs at home. Wriothesley was a party in 1543 to

Cromwell; 'if it shall please your Lordship to cawse Master Wriothesley to devise the prefaces... I shall be gladd to employe my diligence to the spedie setting forthe thereof'.

¹⁵ PRO, SP. 7/1, 58, (*LP*, xi, 169).

¹⁶ PRO, SP. 7/1, 1, (*LP*, xiii, (1), 864). See also P. Marshall, 'The Rood of Boxley, the Blood of Hailes and the Defence of the Henrician Church', *JEH*, vol. 46, no. 4, (1995). See above p. 35.

¹⁷ At the same time Wriothesley was lecturing justices of the peace at the Hampshire quarter sessions meeting on their duty to maintain the religious settlement brought about by Henry. SP1/150, fo. 138-9; (*LP*, xiv, (1), 775).

¹⁸ *CSP, Spanish*, vi, (2), 250.

the investigations in Windsor (which led to three burnings), and to a series of examinations of John Marbeck.¹⁹ The condemnation of some there encouraged Gardiner to investigate the beliefs of the privy chamber in July 1543, but unaccountably he omitted to seek the king's approval for the indictments he initiated.²⁰ Even Anthony Denny, a favourite of the king, and a supposed evangelical, came under suspicion.²¹ The execution in May 1536 of Henry Norris, a member of the privy chamber and a favourite of Henry, had shown however that no man however close he might be to the king, was free from the peril posed by an unpredictable monarch. But disclosure of Gardiner's action against Denny, following an investigation by Hertford, Dudley and Paget, caused Henry to erupt into a rage.²² The joint involvement of those three, suggests that an embryonic triumvirate, able in late 1546 to take over control of the privy council, was functioning by mid-1543. The lesson of Gardiner's error of judgement was lost on Wriothesley, who later made the same mistake in assuming that the king would retrospectively approve of actions which he had not authorised in advance.

Aside from the Windsor investigations, from Easter 1543, Gardiner involved himself in the Prebendaries Plot which continued to mature until the end of the year, by which time Henry had turned over the whole investigation of it to Cranmer, the very man charged with advancing heresy in his own Canterbury diocese. The investigation came to a sudden end with Henry's affirmation of his total confidence in his archbishop, whom he protected because of his profound affection and admiration for

¹⁹ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 192-4; See J. K. McConica *English Humanists and Reformation Politics under Henry VIII and Edward VI* (Oxford, 1965), pp 218-221.

²⁰ Foxe, v. 179.

²¹ Noted by Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 202.

²² Foxe, v. 179.

man, rather than for the reforming cleric.²³ There is no clear evidence that Wriothesley had any part in this enquiry though McConica is of the view that Wriothesley and Gardiner jointly prepared the articles against Cranmer.²⁴ The lesson which Henry intended all to learn from this enquiry - that he alone would select his servants and that he would tolerate no plotting against those he had chosen - was intended to demonstrate the absolutism of his power and show that no attack would succeed against those he was determined to protect.²⁵ That lesson Thomas Wriothesley was to learn within three years. There is more than a suspicion that Henry deliberately led the conservatives into thinking that he approved the investigation of the beliefs of Cranmer in 1543, whereas he never had any intention of allowing him to be in any real peril. In July 1547 in a letter to Cranmer, Gardiner claimed that Wriothesley had sought to persuade Gardiner to stand clear of the attack on the archbishop, advice which he had been happy to adopt; 'when it was permissible to repay evil with evil, I refrained'.²⁶ Such a sanctimonious observation was scarcely believable by anyone who had experienced Gardiner's deviousness. Gardiner would have had every reason for supporting the attack on Cranmer's religious commitment but alleged he chose not to do so. Wriothesley drew to his attention the possibility that the attack on the archbishop could well rebound on his accusers, as indeed it did. Whereas Henry was usually content with the means adopted provided the results were what he wanted, he tended to take a pragmatic view which was overlaid by the conviction that he was

²³ D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer, A Life*, (New Haven, 1996), pp. 316, 320 and many other references.

²⁴ M. L. Zell, 'The Prebendaries' Plot of 1543: a Reconsideration', *JEH*, 27 (1976), pp. 241-53; McConica, *English Humanists*, p. 221.

²⁵ For example, Henry refused to approve the search for heretical books at Windsor, and allowed Philip Hoby to be released after only a few days in the Fleet prison. See Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 201.

²⁶ Muller, *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, p. 325.

always correct. He had shown no reluctance in the past to remove political obstacles irrespective of any legal justification, and as we shall see George Blagge, like Cranmer and Denny was saved not because Henry sympathised with their reformist views, but because he resented unauthorised intervention into his household.

In December 1543 evidence came to light which precipitated the arrest of John Heywood²⁷ and Germaine Gardiner, the bishop's nephew and secretary and half-brother to Wriothesley's wife, Jane. Heywood escaped any punishment but Germaine Gardiner was belatedly executed for his treason in having visited Reginald Pole in Paris in the late 1530s. The reformers rejoiced at the impact of the execution upon the bishop's reputation and status and indeed there was a real possibility that Stephen Gardiner might be sent to the Tower on the ground that intimacy with his nephew was sufficient evidence of his own involvement with Pole.²⁸ Guilt by association was a common enough political ploy, but by his judicious personal appeal to Henry, Gardiner evaded the fate that Seymour, Dudley and Paget had hoped for him. If we are to believe Dudley, and there is no real reason not to do so, he, Hertford and Paget were instructed as a group by Henry to examine the circumstances in which some of his privy chamber were secretly indicted of heresies. It looked very much like the triumvirate in action.²⁹ Factional struggles were intensifying with those three influential reformers ranged against the orthodox Gardiner, Norfolk, Wriothesley, and their friends. Early in 1544 an Act was passed (against conservative opposition) to restrict 'secret and untrue accusations' against persons arraigned under the Act of Six Articles which very effectively reduced the number charged under that Statute.³⁰ For a

²⁷ John Heywood was Thomas More's son-in-law and avoided execution by recanting, later doing public penance. *Greyfriars Chronicle*, p. 46; Wriothesley, i, p. 148; *LP*, xix, (1), 444 (6).

²⁸ *CSP, Spanish*, vi, (2), 539.

²⁹ Foxe, v. 179; Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 203.

³⁰ 35 Henry VIII c. 5. Lehmberg, *The Later Parliaments of Henry VIII*, p. 198.

period the boot was on the reformers' foot and even one of Bonner's staff found himself in some trouble in April 1544.³¹

Hertford had enjoyed outstanding military successes in Scotland in 1545 and earned Henry's gratitude, but Paget, by that date the king's secretary, still thought it necessary in June 1545 to encourage him to maintain good relations with Wriothesley and advised that 'he should do well to salute now and then, with a word or two in a letter my lord of Suffolk and my lord Wriothesley... forgetting not Mr. Denny'.³² As we have noted already Suffolk and Wriothesley worked very closely together in this period and Denny the chief gentleman of the privy chamber, had the king's ear and his total confidence.³³

In October 1545 Gardiner was sent back to Brussels to pursue further discussions with the emperor's representatives, and the influence of the conservative faction was inevitably reduced, while that of secretary Paget increased due to his greater accessibility to Henry and the king's growing confidence in his judgement.³⁴ Gardiner's departure more or less coincided with the return from the Borders of Hertford and Sadler who gave added strength to the reformist membership of the council. An indication of the developing situation is shown in a letter written in November to Paget by Wriothesley who sent him a 'bill which was let fall yesterday, as I was going to Mass, in my dining chamber'. There is every reason to see this 'bill' as

³¹ PRO, SP. 1/197, fo. 53, (LP, xx, (1), 40); Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 354.

³² That 'master of practices' had already by 1545 seen the way that the wind was blowing and chosen to attach himself to Seymour rather than the conservatives. D. Starkey, *The Reign of Henry VIII: Politics and Personalities* (London, 1985), p. 154; S. R. Gammon, *Statesman and Schemer, William First Lord Paget, Tudor Minister* (Newton Abbot, 1973), p. 117.

³³ S. Haynes, *Collection of State Papers... left by William Cecill, Lord Burghley* (London, 1740), as quoted by L. B. Smith, *Henry VIII, The Mask of Royalty* (London, 1971), p. 246.

³⁴ In a letter to Henry, 2 December 1545, Paget wrote, 'if he wer at home, he might peradventure devise sum meanes to pluck this practise out of our handes; and therefor it is good to keep him yet out of the waye for a while, till our thinges here be in sum better forwardnes'. *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 10, p. 745. See also D. L. Potter, 'Diplomacy in the mid 16th century: England and France, 1536-1550', unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1973, pp. 120-1.

a deliberately provocative action. He suggested that Paget show this heretical paper to Henry, and went on to complain that his attempts to identify the authors of other heretical books had been unsuccessful, and had caused some to be 'angry with my doing'.³⁵ Those 'angry' persons were no doubt the reformist members of the court, more especially those attending upon the king, among whom in addition to Denny were George Blagge, George Carew (in whose possession a prohibited book was found), John Gates, William Sharington, later to be associated with Thomas Seymour's fraud upon the Mint, and Thomas Darcy.³⁶ At the same time that the tract was dropped at Wriothesley's feet a bill for the abolition of heresy and heretical books was introduced in the Commons, though without success.

Increasingly pressure was being brought to bear on the reformers. The influence of those who, in the eyes of conservatives were heretics, was a cause of much irritation to councillors like Wriothesley, and the fact that many evangelicals were within the royal household did nothing to discourage efforts to challenge them. By the end of 1545 Henry appeared to have turned very firmly against any further change in religious ceremonial/ (save for the curious conversation with d'Annebault in June 1546),³⁷ and perhaps encouraged by that indication, and the absence of influential reformers, the conservatives including Wriothesley decided that the time was ripe for an attack at the heart of the court, into the king's privy chamber and even upon the queen.

³⁵ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 840.

³⁶ Peter Carew was one of several people arrested as a result of the *furore* which resulted. PRO, SP. 1/212, fo. 45, (LP, xx, (2), 995).

³⁷ Henry in the presence of the admiral and Cranmer, explained that there could be a change of the 'mass in both realms into a communion service'. Cranmer later said that the two kings 'were thoroughly and firmly resolved in their behalf' and they intended 'to exhort the emperor to do the like in Flanders', Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, pp. 472-3. *Memorials of Archbishop Cranmer*, ed. P. E. Barnes (London, 1853), vol. 1, p. 199. *Holinshed Chronicle*, iii, p. 859; Foxe, v. 568.

In all of this a continuing difficulty for the historian is to disentangle the threads of faction, and whereas at one moment a player in the political game might be firmly aligned on one side, personal ambition or family feud, such as was the case with the Seymour brothers in 1548, might create a need for a temporary transfer of commitment to another competing interest. As we shall see Wriothesley was not immune from these cross-currents of political and religious conflict.³⁸ To adopt Steven Gunn's phrase, 'dependence on constant interaction with the king helps to explain the apparently ramshackle nature of so much factional plotting'.³⁹ It is as important to recognise also that Henry regarded religion as an instrument of foreign policy and 'cut his theological cloak to suit the diplomatic fashions of the moment'.⁴⁰

Both the reformers and conservatives had been able from early 1546 to see that Henry's life was to be measured possibly only in weeks and the contest for pre-eminence in the council became the overriding concern for both factions and gave rise to a 'no holds barred' battle for control. The two factions began the climactic struggle for the control which was necessary if the young child standing in the wings awaiting the death of his father Henry, was to be taken under the shelter of the successful group to be led or driven down its chosen religious path. It is arguable that the critical point came with the return of Stephen Gardiner from his ambassadorial duties in Brussels.⁴¹ About the same time, as we have already noted, there were signs and rumours that

³⁸ By way of one example only, both reformers and conservatives were beneficiaries under the will made shortly before his death in July 1550. An explanation could be that he was rewarding the latter and placating the former in the knowledge that his widow and son, both orthodox in religion would have to manage without him after his death in a hostile religious environment.

³⁹ S. Gunn, 'The Structures of Politics in Early Tudor England', *TRHS*, (1997), p. 87.

⁴⁰ L. B. Smith, 'Henry VIII and the Protestant Triumph', *American Historical Review*, 71 (1965-6), p. 1257.

⁴¹ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 232-3. Redworth doubts the connection and disagrees with Smith, *Henry VIII: The Mask of Royalty*, p. 23. *LP*, xxi, (1), 432, 439.

Henry was becoming disenchanted with Catherine Parr.⁴² There were all the signs of renewed persecution of heretics, and while it is unclear as to who initiated the action taken, matters began to move with some speed in early 1546.

Wriothesley and the 1546 Reaction

In October 1545 Stephen Gardiner was sent on embassy to the emperor and was absent from England for about six months. He left behind him Bishop Bonner whose conversion (as Nicholas Heath's likewise), from reformer to one of the harshest enforcers of the law against heretics, led to much persecution in his bishopric of London.⁴³ Parliament had met at the end of November 1545 and Henry chose the opportunity, in place of Wriothesley the Lord Chancellor, to address the members at the closing session just before Christmas 1545 and give his last Parliamentary oration to the members deploring the 'lack of love' and complaining that 'charity between man and man is so refrigerate'. 'Although my Chancellor for the time being hath before this time used very eloquently and substantially to make Answer to such Orations [the Speaker's], as hath been set forth in this High Court of Parliament; yet is he not so able to open and set forth my minde and meaning, and the secrets of my heart in so plain and ample manner as I my self am and can'. So spoke Henry. His speech was in every way remarkable, and has for years fascinated generations of historians. He began with an expression of thanks to the members for their support, reluctant though it might have been, in granting to him the chantry lands, (Henry needed the money), and finished with a sermon on the merits of fraternal love. The facts that it was in such

⁴² There were even rumours that the recently widowed Katherine Brandon might replace Catherine Parr. *LP*, xxi, (1), 289, 346, 552.

⁴³ Foxe, v. 151, 160, 412, 441.

finished with a sermon on the merits of fraternal love. The facts that it was in such short supply in the land, he said, was the fault of all those who sat or stood before him, the prelates 'fathers and preachers of the spirituality' who preached against each other, contending for their different views about religion, leading the laity into confusion, uncertainty and discord. In the place of enlightenment they only found 'darkness'. Likewise Henry found fault with the lay peers and the commons, and their own lack of charity in terms which were strikingly unequivocal on the dangers of faction: 'some be too stiff in their old mumpsimus, others be too busy and curious in their new sumpsimus'. His tearful conclusion was a plea for unity, political and religious, while he bemoaned the general failure to venerate the words of the Bible. 'I am very sorry to know and hear how unreverently that most precious jewel, the word of God, is disputed, rhymed, sung and jangled in every alehouse and tavern'. Never 'was God amongst Christians ever less revered, honoured and served'. He left his hearers overwhelmed. But the reality of spring 1546 showed how little the conservatives had taken to heart the strictures of Henry and how much their determination to control the reformers caused them to pursue a vigorous campaign of repression; his pleas for unity and charity went unheeded. While there were indeed some small movements in the reformist direction the exigencies of politics ultimately determined the steps taken over the next seven or eight months. There was but 'one Truth and Verity', but there were differences of opinion as to which was to be the one universal, Catholic church.⁴⁴ On that issue began the conservative reaction of 1546.

Wriothesley no doubt welcomed the return of Gardiner from his embassy in March 1546, by which time there were clear signs that Henry was adopting a more

⁴⁴ Holinshed, *Chronicle*, iii, pp. 851-53.

previous years. During the period leading up to and during Henry's war against France there was a definite reduction in the pressure on reformers. The French war and the continuing cool relationship with the empire had necessitated a degree of factional restraint, which Henry had demanded; neither conservative nor reformers would be allowed to promote unrest.⁴⁵ The relaxation of tensions between England and continental powers gave greater scope for concentrating on religious affairs at home.

The ultimate outcome of the reformation movement was wholly unclear in March 1546. Among other ideas, Henry was hesitating between trying to negotiate the removal of the papal decree of excommunication and developing an alliance with German Protestants.⁴⁶ There was even a suggestion that Henry, in agreement with Francis of France, would abandon the mass entirely. That suggestion was made by Henry, apparently in all seriousness, to the French admiral d'Annebaut at the meeting summoned to ratify the treaty of Camp.⁴⁷ But it may have been no more than a typical trick of Henry's, throwing a handgrenade into the assembled company to see what reaction it would provoke, much more concerned with the intricacies of his foreign policy than religion.⁴⁸

There is no specific evidence as to what precipitated the reaction in early 1546, and though the wind was blowing increasingly against the reformers, it might have been no more than another example of Henry's unpredictable behaviour. In April and May 1546 there began a vigorous enquiry into the activities of evangelicals, and

⁴⁵ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 206.

⁴⁶ Foxe, v. 562, 568ff.

⁴⁷ *LP*, xxi, (1), 1215, 1309.

⁴⁸ Smith, 'Henry VIII and the Protestant Triumph', pp. 1259-64; For a contrasting view see Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, pp. 472-8; Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 239, n. 31; A. D. Tucker, 'The Commons in the Parliament of 1545', unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Oxford University, 1967, p. 352.

Henry himself wrote to the queen regent in the Low Countries on 20 June bemoaning the spread by heretics of 'wicked opinions among the ignorant common people'.⁴⁹ This work was assisted by Seymour's absence in France from 22 March to the end of July, while Dudley was also away from court between March and the beginning of November except for three short home visits.⁵⁰ This gave Wriothesley the initiative in the council from April to July. In any event during the five months following Gardiner's return an energetic attack on heresy began which developed into an attempt to implicate the queen with those reformers who were increasingly being detected in all strata of society from the privy chamber to the small workshops of the capital.⁵¹ The group of officials, courtiers and confidants at court who were committed to reform supported each other in their religious views, gave encouragement in times of trial and used their influence to protect fellow reformers when danger threatened. Catherine Parr was not the least of these.⁵² Victory for one of the factions fighting for supremacy in the privy council would determine the path of the next reign and each faction while seeking Henry's support, had to take some decisive action before it was too late.

There were some hardy individuals who were prepared to express their concern as to what was happening in England in the summer of 1546. John Dymock writing to William Paget on 23 July from Brame commented that the king 'allows his bishops to burn men for the Word of God's sake' and permits 'his devilish ceremonies' still to be used within the realm. In early August he wrote again to Paget to say that over sixty

⁴⁹ PRO, SP. 1/220, fo. 172, (*LP*, xxi, (1), 1098), and SP. 1/218, fo. 139; (*LP*, xxi, (1), 835, 836, 848).

⁵⁰ *APC, 1542-47*, pp. 359, 501, 546; *LP*, xxi, (1), 478, 1367, xxi, (2), 333.

⁵¹ Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, especially ch. 8.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 356. M. Dowling, *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII* (Beckenham, 1986), pp. 235-7; Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, pp. 456-7.

reformers had fled from Bishop Bonner to the continent to avoid burning.⁵³ He saw Paget as one of the evangelicals at court in whom he could confide.

Thomas Wriothesley's actions show how determined he was to stop the increasing pace of slide into heresy. His closeness to Stephen Gardiner grew as each saw that only by co-operation could further reformation be stayed or restrained. The earlier friction between them resulting from Wriothesley's election as member of Parliament for Hampshire in 1539 had long since disappeared,⁵⁴ and when in October 1542 Wriothesley received from the bishop the grant of mastership of the game in a manor in Fareham, it was expressed to be for the love and affection that Gardiner had for Wriothesley. Furthermore the grant recited that it was as much as for that 'no less love and affection to be in the said Sir Thomas towards me and my see of Winchester as he by sundry ways and means hath declared the same and dayly intendeth to do'.⁵⁵ A further benefit followed in April 1543 by which time moves against the heretics of Kent and Windsor were afoot as Henry relapsed into his most conservative mood.⁵⁶ Perhaps Gardiner looked for Wriothesley's support in the campaign which he promoted against Cranmer in 1543.⁵⁷

Barely had Gardiner returned to England than there commenced the series of events which culminated in the burning of Anne Askew on 15 July. For some months she had been watched by the chancellor's subordinates and by March 1546 enough evidence had been gathered to justify her arrest on 24 May. While the chronology is

⁵³ PRO, SP. 1/222, fos. 79-96, (*LP*, xxi, (1), 1331), PRO, SP. 1/223, fo. 151, (*LP*, xxi, (1), 1491). He was an English agent in the Low Countries.

⁵⁴ PRO, SP. 1/144, fo. 197, (*LP*, xiv, (1), 634). His appointment as principal secretary provided that he should retain his seat in the Commons, PRO, SP. 1/158, fo. 153, (*LP*, xv, 437); Lehmborg, *The Later Parliaments*, pp. 41-3; G. R. Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government: Tudor Politics, Tudor Government* (Cambridge 1974), vol. 1, pp. 202-5.

⁵⁵ HRO, 5M53, no. 132.

⁵⁶ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 180 and note 10.

⁵⁷ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, pp. 297-321.

not wholly clear, six weeks earlier on 3 April that notorious reformer Dr. Edward Crome preached a sermon considered to be heretical. On 9 May, George Blagge, one of Henry's favourite courtiers in the privy chamber spoke in a manner disrespectful of the Mass in the presence of two orthodox members of the House of Commons who promptly 'shopped' him to Wriothesley. Blagge was later detained on the Lord Chancellor's orders. Thereafter events moved swiftly in the following weeks and culminated in Wriothesley's attempt (as Foxe claims), to arrest the queen and remove her to the Tower.

In the heresy hunt of mid 1546 there were many who came near to becoming casualties, including Shaxton and a protégé of Butts, John Taylor, Master of St. John's College, Cambridge.⁵⁸ The normal approach of the authorities was to examine the smaller fry closely in the hope of catching the big fish. John Marbeck of Windsor was questioned about Philip Hoby, Crome was closely examined and disclosed the names of many reformers, and Anne Askew was tortured in the hope of incriminating women of the queen's chamber whose condemnation would infect their husbands. Let us turn to look at these events in more detail.

Edward Crome

Edward Crome was a favoured preacher before Catherine Parr, popular in London through his sermons at St. Paul's⁵⁹ and identified as an evangelical who over the years had frequently annoyed the authorities. Wriothesley must have been much

⁵⁸ P. Lake and M. Dowling, (eds.), *Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth Century England*, (Beckenham, 1987), p. 69. They recanted in time to save their skins.

⁵⁹ M. Maclure, *The St. Paul's Cross Sermons, 1534-1642* (Toronto, 1958), p. 37.

irritated by him like many of the orthodox.⁶⁰ Crome had preached that 'no works can justify in the same manner as Christ does, nor do they satisfy as He satisfied by suffering for us'. To add to the irritations of the orthodox, Crome also proclaimed that they were the seditious ones who defended superstition with no Biblical justification.⁶¹

Crome was born about 1490 and had strongly supported the Aragon divorce, and probably enjoyed some support from Anne Boleyn in consequence.⁶² He had a formidable reputation as a preacher, and in 1531 was in trouble with the authorities for declaiming against essential elements of the Catholic faith, though he retained some credibility with Henry by his vigorous denial of papal supremacy.⁶³ Crome's resulting examination in 1540 by Convocation and by Henry was severe, and he only saved himself by his agreement to retract his views at Paul's Cross. In what later became a feature of his many recantations he neither admitted that he had been wrong nor did he concede the official line; in fact he and others with the wit and skill to manage it, were able to both proclaim and affirm their religious faith by the means of a formal recantation sermon.⁶⁴

Crome opposed the Act of Six Articles in Convocation and his association with Barnes, Garrett and Jerome who were burned in July 1540 shortly after the execution of Cromwell would have been little help to them.⁶⁵ Crome is said to have persuaded Henry to put an end to the persecutions after these burnings and to issue a general

⁶⁰ R. H. Brodie, 'The Case of Dr. Crome', *TRHS*, n.s. 19 (1905), pp. 295-304; S. Wabuda, 'Equivocation and Recantation during the English Reformation: the "Subtle Shadows" of Dr. Edward Crome', *JEH*, vol. 44, 2 (1993), pp. 224-42; Foxe, v. appendix, xvi.

⁶¹ H. Ellis, (ed.), *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, (1846), vol. 1, pp. 212-3.

⁶² Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk, in 1531 described Crome as the finest and most learned preacher in England. *LP*, v, 148. In 1534 Anne Boleyn obtained for Crome the rectorship of St. Mary Aldermary in London, Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 222; *LP*, vii, 693.

⁶³ Brodie, 'The Case of Dr. Crome', p. 296.

⁶⁴ Wabuda, 'Equivocation and Recantation', p. 225.

⁶⁵ Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 307.

pardon,⁶⁶ but he was again in trouble at the end of the year for denouncing masses for the dead.⁶⁷ His equivocating recantation was not acceptable and he was ordered to read a submission drafted for him in such terms that there was no prospect that he could privately retain any mental reservations about its contents.⁶⁸ He read the articles but with little obvious conviction.⁶⁹ He was prohibited from preaching for some time though the restriction was later lifted and in 1545 he was again in trouble with the authorities.

In April 1546 at his own church of St. Mary Aldermary he deliberately attacked the doctrine of transubstantiation in a sermon, was charged with heresy and ordered to appear at Paul's Cross on 9 May to affirm that he believed that in the mass the words of consecration turned the bread and the wine into the very body and blood of Christ. Crome's recantation on that occasion was again inadequate and he was summoned before the council the next day when Wriothesley was present. Three days later on 13 May, Petre wrote to the chancellor sending to him the articles to which Crome was required to subscribe, while the council's letter about Latimer's dealings with Crome was drafted by the Lord Chancellor himself.⁷⁰ A series of further letters sent between 11 and 14 May from the council presided over by Wriothesley, dealt fully with Crome's misdemeanours and were also signed by several other councillors all of whom were confirmed conservatives in religion.⁷¹ Crome was ordered to appear again at

⁶⁶ According to Richard Hilles, Crome 'falling on his knees before the king... prayed him for God's sake to put a stop to these severities'. *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation, 1537-1558*, ed. H. Robinson, Parker Society 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1846), i, p.208.

⁶⁷ Brodie, 'The case of Dr. Crome', p. 299, refers to a letter from Richard Hilles to Henry Bullinger of February 1541 which mentions the occasion. *Original Letters*, i, p. 215. For the judgement of the king in Crome's case see *ibid* p. 214.

⁶⁸ In 1531 Shaxton claimed that it was wrong to preach sermons that denied the principle of purgatory, while it was permissible to disbelieve in private. Foxe, iv. 679-80. Wabuda, 'Equivocation and Recantation', p. 299.

⁶⁹ Foxe, v. 446, 448. Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 330-32. *Original Letters*, i, p. 211.

⁷⁰ PRO, SP. 1/218, fos. 88 and 94, (*LP*, xxi, (1), 810, 813).

⁷¹ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt ii, 842-850; Holinshed, *Chronicle*, iii, p. 856.

Paul's Cross on 27 June and on this occasion, with Wriothesley and Norfolk with a large 'awdience of people', present to hear him read the articles, he made the full affirmation required by the council, and assented to his willingness to assist the council with 'the disclosing and opening of all things' which the king or council might demand.⁷² There were many 'things' that Wriothesley wanted of Crome, and not only the names of those who had urged him not to submit or recant. 'This Dr. Crome, after his comitting, while he was in warde at Greenewych, in the court, under my Lord Chauncelor, accused divers persons as well of the court as of the cittie, with other persons in the countrey, which put many persons to great troble, and some suffred death after'.⁷³ The information he gave about his religious fellow travellers was exploited to the limit and over twenty evangelicals were arrested by the authorities. Crome's heretical sermons had inevitably attracted the attention of the imperial ambassador who wrote to Brussels on 6 July with some satisfaction, 'here is great examination and punishment of heretics, no class being spared'.⁷⁴

Many named by Crome were summoned before the council (at whose meetings Wriothesley attended regularly and presided), and were charged with 'lewde words concerning matiers of religion'. A fortunate few were with 'a good lesson dismissed'.⁷⁵ The information provided was of great value to the authorities, a potential disaster for the reformers, and the cause of much further harassment of some reformers including John Lascells, who was later burned with Askew. Among others Shaxton was condemned⁷⁶ but recanted in time to be compelled by way of expiation to

⁷² *APC, 1542-47*, pp. 414, 423, 440, 462, 466; *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, ii, 842-50; SP. 1/220, fo. 62, (*LP*, xxi, (1), 1027 (2)), SP. 1/221, fo. 5, (*LP*, xxi, (1), 1138); Wabuda, 'Equivocation and Recantation', p. 236.

⁷³ Wriothesley, i, p. 167.

⁷⁴ *LP*, xxi, (1), 825, 938 1127.

⁷⁵ *APC, 1542-47*, pp. 417, 419, 420-23, 449, 464, 466, 479, 492, 509.

⁷⁶ Wriothesley, i, p. 168.

preach at Anne Askew's burning, and Hugh Latimer later suffered for his refusal to repudiate his convictions.⁷⁷ Despite his 'canting, re-canting and de-canting or rather double de-canting', Crome survived well into Mary's reign with a reputation somewhat damaged by his earlier defections.⁷⁸ He was not alone in denying the faith he held to avoid the agony of the flames which was the inevitable end for those convicted of heresy.⁷⁹ There are hints that Crome enjoyed a special relationship with Henry and if he did Crome was not the first to have been grateful for Henry's support as we shall see. How he avoided the stake in Mary's reign and survived into that of Elizabeth, will never be known.

George Blagge

One of Crome's recantations provided the opportunity for Wriothsley to attack George Blagge, gentleman of the privy chamber, squire of the body and a favourite of Henry, 'his pig'.⁸⁰ That opportunity arose from Crome's sermon of 9 May 1546. He had promised the council that he would publicly recant from his former heretical opinions but failed to do so. Blagge heard that sermon and it was afterwards alleged that he made a facetious comment upon the Mass. As Foxe reports the circumstances, Hugh Calverley⁸¹ and Edward Littleton,⁸² two members of Parliament 'craftily to undermine him, walking with him in Paul's church after the sermon of Dr.

⁷⁷ APC, 1542-47, pp. 424, 462, 467; *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 866, 875, 878; *Greyfriars Chronicle*, 51.

⁷⁸ LP, xxi, (1), 1180.

⁷⁹ A. Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Aldershot, 1996), p. 98.

⁸⁰ Blagge had been elected member of Parliament for Bedford in 1545. S. T. Bindoff, *The House of Commons, 1509-1558* (London, 1982), vol. 1, pp. 440-1.

⁸¹ At the time of the events Sir Hugh Calverley was one of the members of parliament for Cheshire. He had been cited to appear in Star Chamber several times. Bindoff, *The House of Commons*, vol. 1, p. 567.

⁸² Edward Littleton was one of the members of parliament for Staffordshire. Bindoff, *House of Commons, 1509-1558*, vol. 2, p. 535.

Crome, asked if he were at the sermon'. Crome had preached that 'the Mass profiteth neither for the quick, nor for the dead', an opinion with which Blagge concurred.

'Wherefore then?' asked Littleton, to which Blagge replied, 'belike for a gentleman, when he rideth a-hunting to keep his horse from stumbling'. Blagge's reply to the question was later, according to Blagge, so distorted by his accusers as to be no more than a travesty, and the answer gave them the opportunity later to communicate his 'heretical' views to the authorities.⁸³ So in early July Blagge's enemies reported that he had reviled the Mass by saying in reply to an enquiry; 'What if a mouse should eat the bread?' that it would be right to elevate the mouse also.⁸⁴

The accusation was reported to Wriothesley and on 11 July he ordered Blagge's immediate arrest and removal to prison from which he was within twenty four hours arraigned and on the perjured evidence of the two accusers convicted and sentenced to be burned.⁸⁵ The legal process was over within three days, and if John Russell, one of Blagge's fellow courtiers, had not reported all the circumstances to Henry, the king's 'pig' might well have been roasted. The manner in which the Lord Chancellor had acted without reference to Henry was considered to be an affront to his dignity and in a manner for which there were precedents, he sent for Lord Chancellor Wriothesley and ordered him with his own hands to draw up the pardon for Blagge, notwithstanding the jury's guilty verdict.⁸⁶ Wriothesley had authorised the arrest of one of the king's personal servants and had put him on trial without Henry's consent.⁸⁷

⁸³ Foxe, v. 564.

⁸⁴ Foxe, v. 564, 551-2. *Narratives of the Reformation*, pp. 41-3.

⁸⁵ The terms of the pardon and details of the allegations against Blagge are to be found in *LP*, xxi, (1), 1382, 1383.

⁸⁶ Bindoff, *House of Commons, 1509-1558*, vol. 1, p. 441. Smith, *Henry VIII, The Mask of Royalty*, pp. 239-40.

⁸⁷ There were at least twelve reformers about the king including his personal physicians, Drs. Butt and Huick. See Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 326-7; and Bindoff, *House of Commons, 1509-1558*; D. Starkey, *The Reign of Henry VIII*, pp. 133-6.

He attempted to reach into the most confidential part of the king's household, to extract a member from it, to charge him with heresy and seek to have him burned. While Henry was willing to see heresy punished he was not prepared to allow any one to presume upon his views without his prior approval and would protect those he wished to preserve whatever the allegations against them. Every action of the chancellor in mid-1546 regarding the heresies he saw about the court suggests that he was convinced of the king's unswerving support. The fact that Blagge was not examined in any way before his trial and had no knowledge of his alleged offence until he was arraigned, together with the speed and secretiveness of the whole process, suggests a significant degree of malice on Wriothesley's part.⁸⁸ Not surprisingly Blagge never forgave Wriothesley. In prison awaiting death he described his enemies as the Roman Church painted with 'the rose colour of persecuted blood'.⁸⁹

There is no indication of what punishment, if any, was meted out to Calverley and Littleton, but the procedure was all of a part with Wriothesley's principal objective to attack the heresies of the queen and her ladies. There is a hint of obsessiveness over his passion to cleanse the court of the canker in its midst, the 'knot of vipers' as Scarisbrick puts it.⁹⁰ Within days of the Blagge episode came the racking of Anne Askew and her burning only a few days after; Wriothesley's role in both was pivotal.

⁸⁸ Wriothesley, i, p. 169. It would have been no help to Blagge that his brother John was Cranmer's agent in London. Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 419, n 179.

⁸⁹ S. Brigden, 'Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, and the "Conjured League"', *HJ*, 37, 3 (1994), p. 536, quoting R. Hughey (ed.), *The Arundel Harington manuscript of Tudor poetry* 2 vols. (Columbia, Ohio, 1960), vol. 1, 295; Bindoff, *House of Commons, 1509-1558*, vol. 1, pp. 440-41; K. Muir, *Life and Letters of Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool, 1963), p. 273.

⁹⁰ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 478.

Anne Askew

The resurgence of the conservative faction at court in 1546 gave Wriothesley three opportunities to attack the reformist movement through the evangelicals in the royal privy chambers. What he especially wanted was the names of those around the queen who were evangelically minded, to provide the means to attack and hopefully ruin those members of the privy council and particularly of the privy chamber who were of the reformist persuasion.⁹¹ The examination of Dr. Edward Crome was part of the same design. His disclosures had pointed to the queen, some of her ladies and also to Anne Askew, a gentlewoman from Lincolnshire who had settled in London and moved in the reformist circles around the court. Wriothesley's purpose was to charge with heresy the wives of Hertford, Dudley, Denny and others within the queen's circle of companions if he could find the material to do so. This would have been of inestimable advantage to the conservative faction as the guilt by association of those reformist members who were the husbands of the queen's ladies, would soon follow it was hoped. How Henry would have reacted to such news is wholly a matter of conjecture but the allegations may well have destroyed or at least seriously damaged the status and activities of the evangelicals, and imperilled everyone caught by the taint of reformism, perhaps even the queen.

Anne Askew had influential friends, was well known and of 'worshipful stock' and distantly related to a former Lord Mayor of London.⁹² She had originally come to London in 1545, was then arrested and arraigned at Guild Hall though no action was

⁹¹ *Select Works of John Bale*, ed. H. Christmas, Parker Society (Cambridge, 1849), pp. 241-2.

⁹² According to Bale, *Select Works*, p. 198, her father was 'Sir William Askewe'. Her two brothers Edward and Christopher had been at court and her sister Jane married Suffolk's steward. The complete history of Anne Askew is in *Select Works*, pp. 147-243; D. Wilson, *A Tudor Tapestry, Men Women and Society in Reformation England*, (London, 1972), pp. 94-6, 115-6, 153, 160, 162, 191-2.

taken at that time as no evidence was presented to the court. Twelve months later, having been betrayed by an informer from her home town, she was summoned by a letter from the council (at that time consisting mostly of conservatives), arraigned again in June 1546, sent to the Tower the next day and there closely interrogated.⁹³ Information about Anne Askew's activities had been gradually assembled by Wadlow, 'a great papist', one of Wriothesley's masters in chancery, who spied upon her and her associates in her lodgings by the Temple and had passed all the information to the Lord Chancellor.⁹⁴ It suggested that her connections with the queen's chamber were real and substantial. The story of the long series of interrogations to extract a confession of heresy to which she was subsequently subjected is based upon the detailed record of John Foxe.⁹⁵ Other material is contained in her own and other records.⁹⁶ The state papers have details of her examination by members of the council, the chancellor's attempts to persuade her to recant, to encourage her to conform while promising her that she 'would want nothing'. She was condemned illegally as no jury was ever empanelled to try her, a fact which Wriothesley would surely have known.⁹⁷

Wriothesley, Gardiner, Paget and others in turn for four hours challenged her upon her views on the Mass, and though they wanted her not only to confess to her errors and also to retract and deny publicly what she had said before, it can hardly be doubted that Wriothesley had his own agenda.⁹⁸ That involved the queen and her

⁹³ *APC, 1542-47*, pp. 424, 462; *LP*, xxi, (1), 898.

⁹⁴ *Narratives of the Reformation*, p. 40. The references in *APC* are limited to one which ordered Anne Askew and her husband to attend before the privy council and the other of June 1546 which sent her to Newgate because she was 'very obstinate and heddye in reasoning in matiers of religion'. *APC, 1542-47*, pp. 424, 462. Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, vol. 1, p. 598, 'Wadloe... a great papist of Wickham College... a Cursitor of the Chancery'; Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 371.

⁹⁵ Foxe, v. 437-50 and in Wilson, *A Tudor Tapestry*.

⁹⁶ There is more material than Foxe records in *Narratives of the Reformation*, pp. 38-45 and Appendix, in which also appears part of *A Treatise of Three Conversions of England* (1604) by the Jesuit, Robert Parsons, pp. 307-11; *LP*, xxi, (1), 1181; Bale, *Select Works*, pp. 196-239.

⁹⁷ Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 374.

⁹⁸ Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 373, where there is a full review of the Askew story.

attendant ladies. Anne Askew never retracted any part of her firmly held convictions, resisting all demands that she sign a 'bill of the sacrament'. As for Paget's motives, it is probable that he had some sympathy for the accused, as he told her that she could confess and then deny her confession later on the ground that she had been forced to admit her errors under pressure, but just as probably he was anxious that Askew should not rock the boat.⁹⁹ But there were others, like fellow reformers Parr and Lisle (Dudley), who also advised her to recant and were derided by her for their faint hearts.¹⁰⁰ They did so out of fear for themselves, for their future and for that of the Reformation; sympathisers would rarely take the risk of speaking for heretics lest they be incriminated themselves. Anne Askew had asked the Lord Chancellor to intercede for her with the king when 'his Grace will well perceive me to be weighed in an uneven pair of scales'. She must initially have had an impression of Wriothesley as a man to whom justice was of paramount importance. Even Shaxton tried to persuade her to recant as he himself had done,¹⁰¹ and 'Rich came and wanted me to show them if I knew any man or woman of my sect', and in particular asked about the ladies at court. That was the heart of the whole operation. While the reformers were content with a recantation to remove the heat, they would not have wanted Askew to incriminate the queen's ladies. Whether coincidence or not, it is interesting that Anne Askew was asked, as Blagge had been in slightly different words, 'whether a mouse, eating the host, received God or no'? She made no comment.¹⁰²

Wriothesley, with the help of Richard Rich, had tried to extract admissions that she had been engaged in heretical communication with members of the court. Her

⁹⁹ *Narratives of the Reformation*, p. 41; Dowling, *Protestantism and the National Church*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁰ Foxe, v. 544.

¹⁰¹ *LP*, xxi, (1), 1180; Dowling, *Protestantism and the National Church*, p. 48. She rebuked Shaxton saying 'it had been good for him never to have been born'; Bale, *Select Works*, p. 218.

¹⁰² Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 372. *Narratives of the Reformation*, p. 41.

obstinate refusal to concede or admit anything which would involve others led them to try their hands at turning the rack to the point that she fainted. Wriothesley's anxiety to find some evidence with which to harass the queen and her closest friends drove him to an act of calculated savagery in which the lieutenant of the Tower courageously refused to engage.¹⁰³ Ultimately it was only his intervention that put a stop to the torture.¹⁰⁴ Short of killing the convicted prisoner to secure those admissions there was nothing more that Wriothesley could do once it was clear that she could not be racked into providing what he wanted. Strictly, torture was unlawful under common law, and had been largely unknown in religious interrogations in England until Tudor times, especially when employed against a gentlewoman already condemned to death.¹⁰⁵ Having been convicted of heresy and sentenced, Anne Askew was entitled to expect that she would not be further ill-used. Although there is significant evidence that torture was used under Henry VIII, a distinction was apparently drawn between the crimes of treason and heresy, in which latter cases it was unheard of.¹⁰⁶

Wriothesley's earlier pretence that he was above party and faction is not borne out by the evidence. His role in the whole distasteful process cannot be excused on the basis that it was his duty as the principal law officer to search out and destroy those who offended against the laws of the realm.¹⁰⁷ The indications are that the lay leaders of the conservative faction were even more determined than the orthodox bishops to obtain Askew's conviction of heresy, even if they had to make a martyr of her. But she was more than a match for them all, refused to recant and declined to incriminate

¹⁰³ *Narratives of the Reformation*, p. 304.

¹⁰⁴ *LP*, xxi, (1), 1180.

¹⁰⁵ R. M. Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation* (Westport 1983), p. 72.

¹⁰⁶ See J. Bellamy, *The Tudor Law of Treason* (Trowbridge 1979), in which there is a comprehensive review of the use of torture both before and after conviction. pp. 109-21, especially pp. 110-11.

¹⁰⁷ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 10, 41-2.

anyone despite all the brutality and intimidation. In her words 'they did put me on the rack because I confessed no ladies or gentlewomen to be of my opinion, and thereon they kept me a long time'.¹⁰⁸ The contemporary evidence in a letter of 2 July 1546 from Otwell Johnson to his brother John shortly after the racking took place shows his horror at what had been done to her.¹⁰⁹

Burning, the penalty for heresy, was visited upon Anne Askew and three others on 16 July 1546, in the presence of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley, Norfolk and 'the most part of the lordes, noblemen and the Kinges Councell' while Shaxton preached the sermon.¹¹⁰ The propaganda value of the burning to the reformers could have been considerable and perhaps it was instrumental in bringing the execution of heretics to an end a short while later. In all that they did, Wriothesley and Gardiner thought they were acting with the king's implicit approval; certainly the attempt to obtain Anne Askew's recantation was unlawful, but there is no reason to suppose that he would have disapproved of the racking.¹¹¹ It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that queen Catherine might have gone the same way had Wriothesley's efforts to implicate her in heresies been successful.

Catherine Parr

The king's marriage to the twice-widowed Catherine Parr in 1543 had raised again the spectre of further resurgence in the evangelicals' efforts to advance the

¹⁰⁸ Foxe, v. 547.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. '... she had been racked since her condemnation (as men say) which is a strange thing in my understanding. The Lord be merciful to us all'. Wriothesley, i, p. 170, '... Anne Askewe, alias Keme, was had to the Towre of London, and there sett on the racke where she was sore tormented, but she would not converte for all the paine'. That latter comment clearly suggests that the authorities in the understanding of the chronicler, were seeking a religious conversion.

¹¹⁰ Wriothesley, i, p. 170.

¹¹¹ Smith, *Henry VIII; The Mask of Royalty*, p. 240.

reformation. According to Wriothesley Henry never had 'a wife more agreeable to his heart' than Catherine Parr.¹¹² That may well have been so but her close association with reformist members of the royal household put her at risk when it was whispered that there were heretics within Henry's and the queen's own households.¹¹³ The marriage had done very little to calm the concerns of the orthodox as to the future direction of the church. Their ascendancy at court was in some peril and led to the allegations of heresy in Cranmer's own diocese.

Catherine Parr had been brought up as a humanist, and among her closest companions were the duchess of Suffolk, Catherine Brandon, lady Denny, and the wives of Edward Seymour, John Dudley, and William Parr.¹¹⁴ Their well-known commitment to the reform of religion made them a target for those who thought that their evangelism would have to be stopped if further deterioration in the religious climate in England was to be prevented. Henry likewise numbered among his personal friends, as well as among the gentlemen of the privy chamber, many who were of the reformist inclination such as Anthony Denny, George Blagge, and (importantly), the king's own personal physicians, Butts and Huycke.¹¹⁵ The religious inclinations of all these reformers were well enough known and all were active in protecting similarly minded radicals, where practicable. Friends at court were often essential in the avoidance of danger. Cranmer was saved by the actions of Dr. Butts, whose death in November 1545 was a serious blow to the reformers not least because his friendship with and closeness to Henry made him an ideal intermediary.¹¹⁶ In spring 1546 the Six

¹¹² PRO, SP. 1/180, fo. 69, (*LP*, xviii, (1), 894).

¹¹³ Foxe, v. 553-561.

¹¹⁴ Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 374-5; D. M. Loades, *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 16-7; Smith, *Henry VIII: The Mask of Royalty*, p. 240.

¹¹⁵ PRO, SP. 1/115, fo. 33, (*LP*, xii, (1), 212), for a letter written in terms clearly heretical.

¹¹⁶ Butts was described by Hooper in a letter to Bullinger of January 1546 as one of the 'real favourers of the gospel'. Robinson, *Original Letters*, p. 33. 'Perhaps it is not entirely coincidence that the

Articles were being vigorously enforced, Henry was seriously ill and the conservatives were increasingly seeking to bring about the downfall of the queen.¹¹⁷

Within Catherine Parr's own household including several whose commitment to reform was undoubted there were hopes of even greater reforms under Edward.¹¹⁸ In January 1547, shortly before Henry's death, Chapuys had told the emperor that the English queen was infected with heresy, and that those around her and at court were all 'confirmed in it by their plans to control the prince, (and)... to gain a party, they drag the whole country into this damnable error'.¹¹⁹ Like Catherine Brandon, the new queen had over the years given much encouragement to reformers such as Miles Coverdale and Hugh Latimer. She had introduced some of its members into the royal nursery as tutors to give more specific direction to the education of young Edward, though her personal role in that is challenged by some historians.¹²⁰ The education of the two younger children of Henry by tutors with evangelical sympathies helped to undermine the conservative dominance between 1544 and 1546, but how far Henry was aware of the religious views of John Cheke and Roger Ascham will never be certainly known though it is unlikely that he was unaware of their part in his son's education.¹²¹ Catherine's influence certainly brought all Henry's children into closer contact with the king than had been the case for some years. The *eminence grise* in

following year saw a number of attempts against evangelicals at court': M. Dowling, 'The Gospel and the Court: Reformation under Henry VIII', in Lake and Dowling (eds.), *Protestantism and the National Church*, p. 69. See also pp. 50-1 for a comment on Dr. Butts, whose 'influence, discreet but crucial, can be discerned throughout the course of the Henrician reformation'. See also M. Dowling, *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII* (Beckenham, 1986), p. 65.

¹¹⁷ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 478; PRO, SP. 1/215, fo. 17, (*LP*, xxi, (1), 346), *LP*, xxi, (1), 552. See p. 135.

¹¹⁸ McConica, *English Humanists*. There are many references to Catherine Parr's reformist views.

¹¹⁹ *LP*, xxi, (2), 756. *CSP, Spanish*, vii, 555-59, viii, 386.

¹²⁰ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 457; Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation*, pp. 94-5 totally discounts the claim that Catherine Parr took any significant part in the education of Edward and Elizabeth. M. Dowling, 'The Gospel and the Court', pp. 36-77.

¹²¹ L. V. Ryan, *Roger Ascham* (Stanford, 1963).

this issue as in many others affecting the court and privy chamber in this period was Anthony Denny, and his influence can hardly be over-estimated.¹²² As Henry's close friend and trusted adviser over many years he was able to protect those who might have been in peril, and to isolate Henry from contacts which he and his evangelical associates thought were undesirable. All of this must have been apparent to the conservative councillors, as much as they were aware of the queen's vulnerable position.¹²³

The problem for councillors like Wriothesley was that they were never quite sure whether Henry would approve today what he had consented to yesterday and it was not difficult to misinterpret the signals from the king. There were rumours going the rounds in January 1546 and again in April, that Henry contemplated ridding himself of Catherine Parr. Van Der Delft had heard a rumour that Henry was considering the widowed duchess of Suffolk as a potential replacement.¹²⁴ Stephen Vaughan, financial agent in the Low Countries, had reported to Wriothesley and Paget from Antwerp in March 1546, suggestions that Henry intended to take another wife, though he was unable to identify the source of these.¹²⁵ Such rumours concerning the queen had also been mentioned in a letter from Cornelius Scepperus (one of the emperor's ambassadors) to Louis Schore in April 1546, and had appeared discreetly in other letters in the following months.¹²⁶ A report similar to that of Scepperus was sent to the emperor which hinted that a degree of coolness existed between king and queen; it was

¹²² Dowling, 'The Gospel and the Court', pp. 66, 67, 71.

¹²³ M. Dowling, 'A Woman's Place? Learning and the Wives of Henry VIII', *HT*, 41, vi (1991), p. 41.

¹²⁴ *CSP Spanish*, viii, p. 318; *LP*, xxi, (1), 289, 346, 552.

¹²⁵ *LP*, xxi, (1), 346. Vaughan claims to have told those who asked for his opinion upon the rumours that 'I never heard of any such thing and that I was sure there was no such thing'.

¹²⁶ *LP*, xxi, (1), 552, where Scepperus wrote to Schore (President of the Council of Flanders), 'dare not write rumours current here [London] with regard to the feminine sex. Some change is expected to be pending'.

an 'innovation for them to be thus separated during the festivities', with Henry in London and the queen at Greenwich during the Christmas 1545 celebrations.¹²⁷ They may however have been no more than unverified reports disseminated to persuade foreign ambassadors, especially those of Charles, that moves were afoot to restore the old religion. Perhaps the conservatives were prepared to believe their own propaganda. It goes without saying however that any suggestion that Henry might be contemplating the abandonment of Catherine Parr would cause great concern to the religious radicals. Whether the rumours had any connection with Catherine Parr's known 'moderate' protestantism which ran 'hand in hand with a cultivated Erasmianism', (to quote Scarisbrick), is mere speculation.¹²⁸

The attack on Catherine Parr through her household companions must be read 'not as a plot against the head of reform, but as one of a series of attempts against the evangelical faction' at court.¹²⁹ Hertford and Dudley had gradually worked themselves into a position where they were able to exert a controlling influence upon the future of the realm, while an opportunity had been provided to the religious conservatives by Crome and Anne Askew to destabilise their authority and attack them through their wives' close relationship to the queen. The efforts to implicate the queen in heresy were probably the brain child of Gardiner (who else?), though Redworth doubts that there is any conclusive evidence to support that suggestion.¹³⁰ She was to be challenged on the basis that she not only harboured reformers among her closest friends and her women attendants, but also consciously encouraged the dissemination

¹²⁷ *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 533, 535.

¹²⁸ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 456; McConica, *English Humanists*, pp. 215ff.

¹²⁹ Dowling, "The Gospel and the Court", p. 70.

¹³⁰ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 233-4; Smith *The Mask of Royalty*, p. 23.

of reformist doctrines which were specifically contrary to the law. So explicit were these allegations that some action was bound to follow.¹³¹

The story as given by Foxe is that Catherine Parr discussed religion with the king as she also held Scripture classes with her ladies in waiting. As Henry's mobility declined she would attend upon him in the privy chamber and urge upon him the need to proceed with reformation in the church. One day after such a discussion at which Gardiner was present, Henry turned to the bishop and commented that 'a good hearing it is, when women become such clerks; and a thing much to my comfort, to come in mine old age to be taught by my wife'. Gardiner as ever eager to take the opportunity presented, commented upon the inappropriateness of a woman presuming to press her opinions upon the Supreme Head of the Church and stated that he could find evidence of the queen's treasonous heresy. Henry appeared to accept the bishop's suggestion and gave permission for articles to be drawn, evidence to be gathered, and the queen arrested and despatched to the Tower. The reality is that Henry was probably more offended with Catherine's challenge to his vanity by her patronising attitude to him in matters of religion, than with any suggestion that she was a heretic living next to the throne. He poured out his complaints to his physician Dr. Wendy who speedily reported the threatened action to the queen.¹³² She visited the king, humbly confessed that her sole purpose in discussing religion with him was to entertain him in his physical discomfort and not to seek to instruct him. The apology was accepted. Wriothesley with his armed band appeared in Whitehall gardens coming across the king and queen there, and sought to enforce the warrant of arrest which he had. A furious

¹³¹ J. A. Muller, *Stephen Gardiner and the Tudor Reaction*, (London, 1926), p. 138.

¹³² Wendy was Dr. Butts successor as physician to Henry. Dowling, *Protestantism and the National Church*, p. 67.

Henry rejected him with 'Knave! Arrant knave! beast! fool!', and the humiliated chancellor retired.¹³³

The attack on the queen was enthusiastically adopted by Wriothesley, and overlapped the Anne Askew affair. There is however no corroborative evidence of the Catherine Parr fiasco which supports Foxe, and the whole of the lengthy and detailed story appears only in the *Acts and Monuments* and rests entirely upon the credibility of its author. All subsequent historians depend wholly on his account for their facts. Despite the Protestant stance implicit in his writing, Foxe was for the most part an accurate chronicler of the period, though not always as precise as we would like. Foxe's reliability as a commentator on Anne Boleyn's reformist views has been strongly defended and there is little doubt today that her evangelical commitment in the early days of the reformation was of great importance.¹³⁴ Yet anything was grist to Foxe's polemic mill, a charge which Foxe himself acknowledged.¹³⁵ With the exception of the first Foxe edition of 1563, all the nine published between 1563 and 1684 include the Catherine Parr story. The reminiscences of John Loude (or Louthe), archdeacon of Nottingham printed in the *Narratives of the Reformation* were written in 1579 and confirm what Foxe records about Anne Askew, Louthe himself being present at her burning. He faithfully recorded the tribulations of George Blagge and Anne Askew which made so deep an impression upon him,¹³⁶ but makes no mention of the Catherine Parr conspiracy. He had little sympathy for the orthodox and would

¹³³ Foxe, v. 553-561; Scarisbrick *Henry VIII*, relies wholly on Foxe, though MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, largely ignores the story, as do other historians for lack of verification.

¹³⁴ E. W. Ives, 'Anne Boleyn and the early Reformation in England: the Contemporary evidence', *HJ*, 37 (1994), pp. 389-400; But for an opposing view see G. W. Bernard, 'The Fall of Anne Boleyn', *EHR*, 106 (1990), and 'Anne Boleyn's Religion', *HJ*, 36 (1993). See also T. S. Freeman, 'Research, Rumour and Propaganda: Anne Boleyn in "Foxe's Book of Martyrs"', *HJ* (1995), pp. 797-819.

¹³⁵ Nicholls, *Narratives of the Reformation*, p. xxi..

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 41.

hardly have failed to note such an important event had he been aware of it.¹³⁷ Curiously enough there has been more debate about the accuracy of Foxe's history of the Askew affair than of Catherine Parr's perils.

Wriothesley is the villain in Foxe's story; he is said personally to have drawn the articles against the queen, obtained Henry's signature to them and gone in person to arrest her and three of her ladies. His subsequent humiliation, as recorded, portrays him as an inept servant, hustled away in disgrace and embarrassment. In consequence he has suffered in others' estimation of him, leaving the impression of *naiveté* and malice. The problem for historians is that there is no contemporary evidence which confirms any conspiracy to arrest Catherine Parr, and the chroniclers Hall, Holinshed and Charles Wriothesley make no reference to the affair. There is no other material either direct or circumstantial, which confirms the Foxe story. Charles Wriothesley's closeness to the court would probably have ensured the mention of such a significant event had there been any truth in it, though his family relationship to Thomas Wriothesley might have persuaded him to suppress the facts to prevent further embarrassment to the Lord Chancellor. Likewise the resident ambassadors in England, with their spies and paid informers and ears attuned to every rumour from the court, are silent on a topic that would have been important news for their sovereigns. Even one of the members of Wriothesley's guard would surely have spread the word of such a remarkable occasion. Nowhere else is there a hint of anything remotely suggestive of an attempt to arrest the queen. Among historians Scarisbrick, David Starkey and L. B. Smith appear to give credence to the Foxe record, (was it to teach Gardiner and Wriothesley a lesson or scare Catherine Parr?), but the lack of any confirmatory

¹³⁷ Ibid, The only reference to Catherine Parr is in a footnote on p. 305.

evidence inevitably casts doubt upon part of the staple diet of history books for the last four hundred years.¹³⁸ John King believes that 'it is hard to imagine a verifiable route for a story that Foxe publishes nearly a generation after the alleged events had taken place'.¹³⁹

It would be wrong however to assume from all the above that the story of Wriothsesley's attempt to arrest the queen in the gardens at Whitehall is necessarily a fiction. The events leading up to it may have a germ of truth; Gardiner's whispering mischief in Henry's ear about Catherine's heretical opinions (as Foxe claims), and Henry himself becoming exasperated with her 'lecturing' him upon the Bible. Other peripheral detail (for example, the names of the ladies-in-waiting) is accurate and we must therefore keep an open mind on the subject; perhaps an informed but not wholly reliable source provided the material to Foxe.¹⁴⁰ The fact that the story did not appear in the 1563 edition perhaps also suggests that Foxe received it from an informant, rather than simply making it up. A convenient stick with which to beat the Henrician Catholics would be gratefully accepted by him and its use wholly consistent with his purpose in writing his *Acts and Monuments*. To blacken the characters of Wriothsesley and Gardiner (and others of the orthodox view) as part of his overall attack upon the malign influence of those of the old religion was his purpose.

¹³⁸ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, pp. 478-81; D. Starkey, *The Reign of Henry VIII; Personalities and Politics* (London, 1985), pp. 144-5; Smith, *Henry VIII: The Mask of Royalty*, p. 225.

¹³⁹ John King 'Fact and Fiction in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*', in Loades, *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, p. 32, offers a refutation of the story, pp. 12-35. For a generally favourable assessment of Foxe's accuracy see P. Collinson, 'Truth and Legend: the Veracity of John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*' in *Elizabethan Essays*, (London, 1994), pp. 151-77. For a less favourable judgement see J. A. F. Thomson, 'John Foxe and some sources for Lollard History', *Studies in Church History* (London, 1965). Freeman, 'Research, Rumour and Propaganda', pp. 797-819.

¹⁴⁰ I am indebted to Dr. Tom Freeman for his interesting and helpful comments on the continuing discussion regarding the reliability of Foxe's history.

While in August 1546 Wriothesley was seen to be a personage of major influence in state affairs, by the middle of September that perception had somewhat altered and the triumvirate of Seymour, Dudley and Paget were seen to be gaining control of the king in a physical as well as an intellectual sense. In the religious field the situation was the same. Seymour had been in France from April to the end of July 1546 and Dudley out of the country from the same month to the end of November. Their absence eased the way for the conservatives over those weeks. In early 1546 the conservatives had been in the ascendant, with Gardiner and Wriothesley in the vanguard, but by early September the harassment of heretics was over mostly due to the influence of the reformists in the privy chamber. The conservatives' situation was not helped by the complete absence of Norfolk from all meetings of the council except two between August 1546 and the end of the year.¹⁴¹ Hiding away at Kenninghall was no help to the cause of the orthodox. In retrospect, it can be seen that the prospects of any conservative revival were then receding and within two more months had foundered completely.

Six months after the heresy hunt Chapuys returned to the court in Flanders in late January 1547. Almost his first report to the queen regent recorded his anxiety that Henry was giving 'his countenance to [the] stirrers-up of heresy', encouraged no doubt by Catherine Parr, because the queen 'is infected by the sect'. While this is not the place to debate the issue, we in passing note that Bindoff thought that if Henry had survived a little longer he 'might himself have been numbered among them [the Protestants]'. Likewise Eric Ives has written that 'in December 1546 the King (Henry)

¹⁴¹ Tucker, 'The commons in the Parliament of 1545', p. 687.

turned his back decisively on religious conservatism'.¹⁴² Although he thought that several councillors were well disposed to the emperor and Catholicism, he doubted that many would oppose Seymour or Dudley in the light of the open hostility shown by them to Wriothesley and Paulet. Chapuys despatched that letter from Louvain on the day of Henry's death, and in ignorance of it, but his pessimistic judgement about the growing supremacy in council of the reformers was fully confirmed within two months.¹⁴³

Rapprochement with the Reformers?

The failure of conservative attempts in the summer of 1546 to root out heresy at court ultimately forced Wriothesley to associate with the Hertford grouping; though Foxe tells us that Hertford was known to be an enemy of Wriothesley in mid 1546¹⁴⁴ there was no realistic alternative if he was to secure a place in the next government under Edward.¹⁴⁵ It is clear from the later pattern of events that Wriothesley moved away from his fellow conservatives, though probably discreetly, to ally himself to the increasingly influential reformists. With the crowning of a new king, there would be a different religious environment and a change of attitude would be called for. A gradual shift of control in the council from the conservatives to the evangelicals had occurred some time in the autumn. Perhaps the clearest manifestation of that had been the cessation of heresy trials after the burning of Anne Askew, which proclaimed that the attack upon the heretics had failed to yield the results hoped for, though the precise

¹⁴² S. T. Bindoff, *Tudor England* (London, 1964), pp. 149-50; E. W. Ives, 'Henry VIII's Will: A Forensic Conundrum', *HJ*, 35, 4 (1992), p.

¹⁴³ *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 555-8.

¹⁴⁴ Foxe, v. 544; *LP*, xxi, (2), 756.

¹⁴⁵ E. W. Ives, 'Henry VIII's Will; a forensic conundrum', *HJ*, 35 (1992), pp. 781-4; See also *APC*, 1547-50, pp. 3-6; *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 100-4; Wriothesley, i, pp. 178-80.

time when the reformers began to exercise greater control and influence is difficult to pin down with certainty. Certainly Bonner was reduced to burning prohibited books.

From September until November Gardiner, Wriothesley and Paulet appeared to be in charge of the day-to-day operations of the government, and for some part of this period Henry was absent at Windsor and other palaces with most of the residue of his court.¹⁴⁶ In mid September the privy councillors with the king wrote to Gardiner and Wriothesley in London asking them to take some action regarding the navy as the 'lord admiral [Dudley] be departed into his country', (which was not correct).¹⁴⁷

According to Gammon 'their group [Hertford's and Lisle's] became more regular in attendance at the council and more active on the board' in late summer,¹⁴⁸ and that assessment is supported both by Scarisbrick and Jordan.¹⁴⁹ The council at that time included among its conservative members, Gardiner, Wriothesley, Norfolk, Tunstall, Rich, Browne and Gage, and they were opposed by Hertford, Lisle, Parr, Sadler, Cranmer, and Paget.¹⁵⁰ Four or five neutrals made up the total council of nineteen. As uncle of the heir to the throne, Hertford was in a particularly advantageous position which was enhanced by his successful handling of the recently concluded war with France. By late autumn Hertford and Lisle had become the two most influential members of the council.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Henry was unwell at the time; 'Quelque indisposition' according to de Selve on 28 October. G. Lefevre-Pontalis, (ed.), *Correspondence Politique de O. de Selve, 1546-1549*, (Paris, 1888), p. 47; *LP*, xxi, (2), 315, 546; *CSP Spanish*, viii, 364, 371. Within a few weeks Henry had 'greatly fallen away'. *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 533; *LP*, xxi, (2), 606.

¹⁴⁷ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt ii, 871.

¹⁴⁸ Gammon, *Statesman and Schemer*, p. 121.

¹⁴⁹ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, pp. 481-2; Jordan, *Edward VI, The Young King*, p. 48; *LP*, xxi, (2), 605.

¹⁵⁰ It is interesting to speculate how different attitudes towards foreign policy (between Norfolk and Gardiner for example), cut across the apparent united conservative front as compared with the reformers who seemed to have been less troubled by those opinions.

¹⁵¹ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 482, *LP*, xxi, (2), 546, 605, 621; Adams, 'Tudor Minister: Sir Thomas Wriothesley' makes no reference to the very significant step in Wriothesley's political career of joining himself to the reformist trio of Seymour, Dudley and Paget.

To avoid being publicly identified with any particular faction Wriothesley had said that 'rather than I would have consented in my heart to any party, tumult or faction in the realm, if I had had a thousand lives I would have lost them all one after another'.¹⁵² At some stage he might have believed that, but a few months before Henry died he needed to make a choice of which grouping he needed to support to secure his political future. The French and Imperial ambassadors formed their own views of the changes in the council; de Selve in June had thought that Wriothesley had 'great influence with the king' while in September Van der Delft believed that Hertford and Lisle were the dominant figures in the government.¹⁵³ The Imperial ambassador wrote to the emperor on 24 December that 'four or five months ago was great prosecution of heretics and sacramentaries which has ceased since Hertford and the Lord Admiral have resided at court'.¹⁵⁴

By late autumn the indications were that Hertford and Lisle were able to control matters in the council, Paget as secretary was daily by the king's side once peace was agreed, and Denny and Herbert had a stranglehold over access to Henry in the privy chamber, which as we shall see, was critical in preventing Stephen Gardiner from being able to confront him face to face in the disagreement about the land exchange. While it is impossible to determine the precise date when Wriothesley overtly gave his support to Hertford, as Lord Chancellor he presided over meetings of the council and through that office he could exercise some influence in favour of the

¹⁵² L. B. Smith, *Henry VIII: The Mask of Royalty* (London, 1971), p. 241, citing PRO, SP. 10, 4, ff. 41. The reference, however, is incorrect, and my investigations to date in the PRO have not identified the source. The context of the quotation suggests a date in late 1546, but it is unclear in what connection and to whom the words were spoken or written.

¹⁵³ CSP, *Spanish*, viii, 467; LP, xxi, (1), 1207, 1251, 1463; de Selve, *Correspondence Politique*, pp. 5, 10.

¹⁵⁴ CSP, *Spanish*, viii, 532; LP, xxi, (2), 605.

reformers, perhaps even taking with him the four or five uncommitted members, including St. John, Russell and Wingfield.¹⁵⁵

Wriothesley's own temperament made the change of allegiance easier than it might have been for others. He had moved from the ranks of Cromwell's reformers to a firm orthodoxy in 1540 and circumstances now required another change. Though he never became one of them, circumstances drove him to join forces with his former religious opponents. Richard Moryson wrote later of Wriothesley, 'I knew he was an earnest follower of whatsoever he took in hand, and did very seldom miss where either wit or travail were able to bring his purpose to pass'.¹⁵⁶ Written by an evangelical and former member of Henry's privy chamber, that letter needs to be treated with some reservation,¹⁵⁷ but all the external evidence shows that Wriothesley directed his efforts to the energetic pursuit of his own interests. He exhibited a ruthless determination to follow to a conclusion any task he undertook, an attitude he applied as much to the prosecution of heretics as to his actions to maintain his seat in government in late 1546.

It was this willingness to adjust his loyalty dependent upon circumstances which gave rise to doubts about the value of his friendship. As we have already noted Wriothesley had promised it to Thomas Wyatt, a reformer, his 'assured ffrende' and had claimed that he 'plaid thonest man' with him,¹⁵⁸ but in the spring of 1538 Wyatt suspected that Wriothesley was acting only in his own interests and even Cromwell in

¹⁵⁵ Russell was earlier viewed as a conservative. Chapuys recommended him, Gardiner, Wriothesley and Browne in the summer of 1542 as deserving of imperial pensions. D. Willen, *John Russell, First Earl of Bedford, One of the King's Men*, (London, 1981), p. 46; *LP*, xvii, App. B, 23.

¹⁵⁶ *St. P, Foreign, 1547-53*, p. 490.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 490; Bindoff, *House of Commons, 1509-1558*, vol. 2.

S. Brigden, (ed.), 'The Letters of Richard Scudamore to Sir Philip Hoby', *Camden Miscellany*, 30, (1990), p. 78.

¹⁵⁸ *BL, Harleian MS 282*, fo. 281. See Chapter 2 above.

April of that year warned Wyatt to be wary of him.¹⁵⁹ John Husee too was equally sceptical of the worth of Wriothesley's promises, and told Lord Lisle in October 1538 that 'Mr. Wryothessley's promise, [and] fair hests and promises of the court are holy water' and worthless.¹⁶⁰ The evidence justified his reputation for unreliability and no doubt led to the suspicion with which he was viewed by the reformers. There never seems to have been anything better than a feeling of armed neutrality in the reformers' relations with Wriothesley during the last months of 1546. As we shall see he was needed as Lord Chancellor to deal with Surrey and Norfolk and perhaps his studied inaction over Gardiner's difficulties helped to prevent his early reinstatement in Henry's good books. In September and later in December the council met at Wriothesley's house at Ely Place London, perhaps an indication of his growing acceptance into the inner circle of the now dominant evangelical group.

Wriothesley and the Fall of Gardiner and Surrey

The conservative faction in the summer of 1546 seemed finally to have triumphed over the evangelicals but within a few months their victory had turned to ashes. The extraction from Crome of the names of many reformers and the burning of three heretics with Anne Askew appeared in September to have been a disappointing outcome for all of the efforts of the religious conservatives. The result was a near disaster for Wriothesley followed as it was by Gardiner's humiliation and the Howard catastrophe. Gardiner had for years been a reliable and effective government servant and secretary to Henry and before his replacement by Cromwell in 1530 he had been the king's mouthpiece and communicator. He had 'swallowed his instinctive leanings'

¹⁵⁹ R. B. Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell* 2 vols. (Oxford, 1902), ii, no. 253.

¹⁶⁰ Lisle *Letters*, v, 1244.

towards the pope and adapted himself to changed circumstances committing himself to Henry as Supreme Head of the Church.¹⁶¹ During Henry's life Gardiner never ostensibly wavered in his commitment to the Catholic church and to its rituals, changed though they were by Henry with the passage of time. Wriothesley came to share his religious commitment, though superficially they were at opposite ends of the religious spectrum in the years when Wriothesley was servant to Cromwell. While the well rehearsed meeting at which Gardiner was allegedly reconciled with Cromwell was a charade, all the evidence confirms a firm and lasting reconciliation between Wriothesley and Gardiner.

Gardiner's enormous wealth and opportunities for patronage made him a man much courted by those who believed that his influence would help them, but he was capable of astonishing insensitivity and acquired many enemies in consequence. He also thought that his status in the state and standing in Henry's eyes was unassailable (an unspoken bond of affection) and this attitude led him on several occasions to presume too much.¹⁶² The last time on which he chose to stand upon his dignity proved to be ruinous for him and the conservative faction in the council. It will be remembered that Gardiner with Wriothesley was at least partially in control of the government in London in November 1546 and no doubt that gave him a feeling of security. At the end of the month he was invited to 'exchange' some land with the Crown, but was reluctant to do so, and assumed that if he discussed the matter with Henry, that would be the end of the matter. The message which reached the king however suggested a truculent refusal of his proposal, precisely the sort of conduct

¹⁶¹ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, p. 25, argues that in the early 1520s Stephen Gardiner showed more signs of reformist sympathies than Cranmer.

¹⁶² Foxe, vi. 36. Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 239. He had made a similar error of judgement in 1536 regarding Francis Bryan. Ibid, p. 76.

calculated to enrage the king. Hearing that Henry was affronted at his response Gardiner wrote letters to Henry and to Paget on 2 December. He asked the secretary to pass on his letter to the king, which lamented his infelicity and 'most humbly on my knees desire your majesty to pardon it'.¹⁶³ Henry refused to be 'molested' further; 'if your doings heretofore in this matter had been agreeable to such fair words as ye have now written, neither you should have cause to write this excuse, nor we any occasion to answer the same'. What offended Henry further was that Gardiner had previously discussed the whole matter with Wriothesley, Paget, and Edward North, who no doubt advised him to defer to the king's request, but Gardiner would still not give way, and 'utterly refused to grow to any conformity'.¹⁶⁴ Perhaps more than Gardiner, they appreciated the importance of not antagonising Henry. Gardiner was thereafter absent from the privy council for a few weeks, and it is arguable that Henry's decision to delete his name from his list of executors ('I myself could use him and rule him to all manner of purposes as seems good to me; but so shall you never do') could in part be a consequence of this sharp disagreement.¹⁶⁵ Henry may also have had suspicions as to Gardiner's loyalty to the Royal Supremacy.¹⁶⁶ His absence and that of Norfolk from the council deprived Wriothesley and the remaining conservatives of a powerful voice.

Whether Gardiner was the victim of his own clumsiness or was 'set-up' by members of the evangelical faction at court remains a matter of dispute. Scarisbrick and Starkey incline to the view that a reformist conspiracy brought about Gardiner's

¹⁶³ Muller, *Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, nos. 112, 113.

¹⁶⁴ Foxe, vi. 138-9; *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 883; SP1/226, fo. 21, (LP, xxi, (2), 487) and LP, xxi, (2), 493.

¹⁶⁵ In Henry's words Gardiner was 'a wilful man, not meet to be about his son'. Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 245.

¹⁶⁶ Foxe, vi. 162. Under Mary, Gardiner lost no time in reconciling himself to the papacy, given the chance.

embarrassment, an opinion not shared by Redworth.¹⁶⁷ Scarisbrick also links Gardiner's misfortune with the downfall of the Howards which occurred at much the same time. It was in the reformers' interests to remove Gardiner from the council in the last weeks of 1546 with Henry seriously ill and in imminent danger of death, and in early December 1546 they had hoped that Gardiner and his associates would end up in the Tower.¹⁶⁸ If the bishop's disgrace was a result of their efforts they achieved almost all that they could have hoped for. His isolation at a time when most members of the council, especially the conservatives, were being kept away from Henry, was very helpful to the reformers.¹⁶⁹ It is unlikely that Wriothesley played any active part in the isolation of Gardiner, and it would have been in his interests to avoid being dragged into the dispute however much he must have regretted Gardiner's temporary rustication. Nonetheless the situation must have been very difficult for Wriothesley; he could not support Gardiner though he would have wished to avoid building a barrier between himself and the bishop. In contrast he played a significant part in the destruction of the Howards.

Almost the last judicial act of Thomas Wriothesley as Lord Chancellor was to authorise in January 1547 under the Great Seal, a commission for the trial of Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, charged and convicted of high treason after an unusually lengthy trial in which the accused defended himself with some vigour and with many side-swipes at his accusers, witnesses and judges.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 490; Starkey, *The Reign of Henry VIII*, p. 156; Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 240-1.

¹⁶⁸ *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 556.

¹⁶⁹ Muller, *Stephen Gardiner and the Tudor Reaction*, p. 140.

¹⁷⁰ G. F. Nott, *The Works of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder*, 2 vols. (London, 1815). For details of the life of Henry Howard, see E. Casady, *Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey* (New York, 1938), Starkey, *The Reign of Henry VIII*, and Brigden, 'Henry Howard, and the "Conjured League"', and *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, ed. W. Cobbett, *et al* 42 vols. (London, 1816-98), pp. 451-70.

Henry Howard was born in 1517 into the family of the premier noble of England, guaranteed by birth a place among the highest in the land and inheriting from his father a total conviction in the superiority of the nobility. He was never able in his thirty years of life to reconcile himself to the growth of a new class of ennobled families whose titles were rewards for talent and dedicated service rather than on account of pedigree.¹⁷¹ He found it impossible to cure himself of a fixed conviction that he was not bound by rules applicable to others, and the lavishing of honours, the deference accorded to him and the initial willingness of his seniors to treat his pranks as mere youthful indiscretions, confirmed him in that conviction and led him into more serious trouble as the years progressed.

The council sent him to the Fleet prison in July 1542 for disorderly behaviour¹⁷² lost patience with him in April 1543 and sent him back to the Fleet.¹⁷³ Wriothesley then principal secretary, examined him on his offences, an experience to which Surrey referred later.¹⁷⁴ He thought that his father should be king if Henry died for any reason, though that information was ignored at the time on the grounds that it was talk typical of foolish women.¹⁷⁵ It seems in retrospect not to have been so. His earlier leanings towards the reformed faith and tendency to dispute on scriptural matters helped to tarnish him in the eyes of the government¹⁷⁶ as had his contempt for authority

¹⁷¹ 'These new erectyd men woulde by their willes leave no noble men on lyff', Surrey told Knyvett. PRO, SP. 1/227, fo. 97, (LP, xxi, (2), 555 (1)).

¹⁷² LP, xvii, 493, 542, 557.

¹⁷³ APC, 1542-47, p. 104. He had been sent to the Fleet for challenging someone to a duel, LP, xviii, (1), 542. His companions were Thomas Wyatt, William Pickering and Thomas Clere. LP, xviii, (1), 73, 315 (1). Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 340; PRO, SP. 1/215, fo. 28, (LP, xviii, (1), 351).

¹⁷⁴ PRO, SP. 1/227, fo. 76, (LP, xxi, (2), 541).

¹⁷⁵ LP, xxi, (1), 351. Servants of Surrey when questioned said 'if ought cam at the king, and my lord prince, he [Surrey] would be king after his ffather'.

¹⁷⁶ There is good evidence to suggest that at this time Surrey's sympathies were with the reformers, though he later reverted to the old religion. Brigden, 'Henry Howard and the "Conjured League"', pp. 513-4 and 522. Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 340-4. G. Burnet, *The Abridgement of the*

in previous years.¹⁷⁷ He has been fairly described as a 'gifted juvenile delinquent', and as a young man of 'almost insane indiscretion'.¹⁷⁸ His ridicule of Paget at his trial was not directed at Paget alone but at all the 'new' men who had gained the ear of the king and become influential in government.¹⁷⁹ Those men had made their way in Henry's service by force of character, sheer efficiency and dedication; but they were not of noble birth, which is what galled him so much.¹⁸⁰ Norfolk had also said that he was not liked by other privy councillors 'because they were no noblemen born themselves'.¹⁸¹ The Tudor world was changing and the king's most valued servants qualified themselves for office by competence and efficiency rather than noble birth.

Surrey's long standing friendship with George Blagge turned sour when a bitter argument nearly turned to violence, and an equally close association with Richard Southwell, a convinced Catholic and his former companion in arms, was to end not long after with his accusation that Surrey was planning a *coup* against the crown. This ultimately led Surrey to the block.¹⁸² The defection of Wriothesley¹⁸³ to the Seymour

History of the Reformation of the Church of England (London, 1705), pp. 255-7. John Foxe was appointed tutor to the orphaned children of Henry Howard and held the office from 1547 until 1553.¹⁷⁷ Henry Howard had not endeared himself to the government by stone throwing in the streets in 1543, by his suggestion that Norfolk was the man most suited to be the guardian of the young prince Edward, by his pressure to activate the Boulogne campaign and by his ability to offend even his long term friends such as George Blagge. He had been imprisoned in 1543 for eating flesh contrary to a proclamation forbidding it, and his loud-mouthed threats against the low-born who occupied places of authority denied to him, were reminiscent of the behaviour of Edward Stafford, duke of Buckingham, (Surrey's grandfather), who loathed Wolsey and talked treasonably to his surveyor, chancellor and confessor of what he would do, if pushed too hard. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, pp. 120-23. Holinshed, *Chronicle*, iii, p. 832.

¹⁷⁸ W. K. Jordan, *Edward VI, the Young King, the Protectorship of the Duke of Somerset* (London, 1968), p. 49; H. W. Chapman, *Two Tudor Portraits* (London, 1960), pp. 107, 126.

¹⁷⁹ PRO, SP1/227, fo. 97, (LP, xxi, (2), 555 (1)).

¹⁸⁰ Hertford came from Wiltshire gentry, Lisle was the son of Dudley a civil servant, Russell of mercantile gentry in Dorset, Paget the son of a sergeant-at-arms in the City, Gardiner, of a clothmaker from Bury St. Edmunds, and Thomas Wriothesley son of a king's herald, of the gentry but not the nobility.

¹⁸¹ N. Williams, *A Tudor Tragedy; Thomas Howard, Fourth Duke of Norfolk* (London, 1964), p. 16, quoting Lord Herbert of Cherbury, *The Life and Raigne of King Henry the Eighth* (1649), p. 563.

¹⁸² J. A. Froude, *The History of England* vol. iv (London, 1875), p. 215; Cherbury, *Henry the Eighth*, p. 562, 'Sir Richard Southwell (who) said that he knew certain things, that touched his fidelity to the king'. The possibility has been canvassed that a servant of Thomas Wriothesley (Dr. John Fryer,

camp sometime in the autumn of 1546 left Gardiner and Norfolk almost isolated, (with Norfolk absenting himself from the council), and did nothing to give Surrey confidence for the future with the prospect of a reformist government largely composed of the upstarts he so despised.¹⁸⁴

Surrey was arrested with his father and lodged temporarily at Wriothesley's London house in early December 1546 where he was interrogated,¹⁸⁵ before being taken ostentatiously to the Tower with his accuser Richard Southwell on 12 December.¹⁸⁶ Southwell was quickly released and on 14 December 1546 went with others to secure the palace of the Howard family at Kenninghall and to interview the duke's mistress and his daughter the duchess of Richmond.¹⁸⁷

Depositions had been obtained within days, some of them written in Wriothesley's own hand while some draft documents were corrected by him.¹⁸⁸ He also prepared a series of questions to serve as the basis for the charges against the two Howards which propounded the significance of Surrey's claim to the throne. One document written out by the Lord Chancellor was interlined by the king, with the note on the legal aspects of the matter being penned by Wriothesley.¹⁸⁹ Henry had taken a very close personal interest in the process against the Howards and drove the whole matter forward with all the urgency of a very sick man.¹⁹⁰ In a letter sent to

formerly a servant of Surrey) might have betrayed Surrey. Brigden, 'Henry Howard and the "Conjured League"', p. 535. *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 533.

¹⁸³ Brigden, 'Henry Howard and the "Conjured League"', p. 526.

¹⁸⁴ Surrey had called Paget 'catchpole', a term of abuse. Wriothesley, i, p. 177; *Greyfriars Chronicle*, p. 53.

¹⁸⁵ Van der Delft reported that Surrey was accused of 'ambiguous discourse against the king' the 'object being to gain government of the prince'. *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 526.

¹⁸⁶ Wriothesley, i, p. 176; A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (2nd ed.) (London, 1989), p. 220.

¹⁸⁷ Cherbury, *Henry the Eighth*, p. 563.

¹⁸⁸ *LP*, xxi, (2), 555, (7) and (8).

¹⁸⁹ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 891, includes the charges alleged against Surrey and Howard.

¹⁹⁰ *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. ii, 891, where the footnote reads, 'This paper, which is in the handwriting of Wriothesley, is without title or date, but is evidently the groundwork of the charges

Wriothesley in mid-December 1546, Surrey referred to the escapade in 1543, and mentioned that he (Wriothesley) 'had the examination of matters touching allegiance then laid to my charge wherein God knoweth with what danger I escaped notwithstanding my innocency'.¹⁹¹ Wriothesley as Lord Chancellor had no choice but to pursue the Howards through the whole process of examination and condemnation, for he was Henry's man and Henry wanted his vengeance visited upon those who had called into question his kingship and his succession. Despite any feeling of sympathy for the Howards, Wriothesley would never have allowed anything to over-ride the absolute need to please the king.¹⁹²

There were many allegations against Surrey including one that the Howards had thought to obtain control of the person of Prince Edward. Wriothesley told the imperial ambassador that 'the cause of their arrest was that they planned to obtain government of the king who was too old now to allow himself to be governed', and that 'their intention was to usurp authority by means of the murder of all the members of the council and the control of the prince by themselves alone'.¹⁹³ The most serious complaint (in Henry's eyes), was that in quartering his arms with those of Edward the Confessor, Surrey challenged the right of Henry's son and successor Edward to inherit the crown.¹⁹⁴ This was a direct threat to Henry's title to the throne and the right of his heirs to succeed him and was indisputably treasonable.¹⁹⁵

against the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Surrey, and possesses considerable interest, from the words printed in small capitals being interlined by Henry VIII himself, in a tremulous hand'.

¹⁹¹ *LP*, xxi, (2), 541.

¹⁹² In the view of L. B. Smith, the fall of the Howards 'was largely accidental', an opinion now mostly rejected. See his 'Henry VIII and the Protestant Triumph', *American Historical Review*, 71, (1965-6), pp. 1237-64 at p. 1242.

¹⁹³ *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 532-5. There really is no evidence of a projected wholesale slaughter of the council and perhaps Wriothesley's purpose was to explain his new alignment with Hertford and his group.

¹⁹⁴ Surrey had argued with Garter Herald in August 1545 about his pedigree. PRO, SP. 1/223, fo. 34, (*LP*, xxi, (1), 1425).

¹⁹⁵ *LP*, xxi, (2), 555, 697.

Wriothesley read Surrey's indictment to the court and the jury. Surrey was not tried before his peers as his was only a courtesy title, and while the outcome of his trial on 13 January was a foregone conclusion, Paget, following a visit to the king's bedside,¹⁹⁶ had to make strenuous efforts to persuade the jury, after an unusually long hearing, to bring in the only verdict acceptable to Henry.¹⁹⁷ A death sentence alone would be adequate expiation of the Howards' crimes. Participating in his one state trial as chancellor Wriothesley pronounced the obligatory sentence of hanging and disembowelling, though this was later commuted to beheading, which followed with the usual speed on 19 January 1547.

On 20 January 1547 the bill for the attainder of the duke of Norfolk (Surrey though dead was also included in the bill) was presented to a meeting of the peers and was there and then approved by them.¹⁹⁸ Wriothesley pressed parliament to give assent to the bill without delay 'in order that certain offices held by Norfolk might be given to others against the approaching creation of the prince'.¹⁹⁹ The bill having been passed by both Houses, the Lord Chancellor announced on 27 January that the royal assent was to be given by himself, St. John, Hertford and Russell, the commissioners authorised by Henry who was too sick to attend and give his consent in person. Henry was terminally ill on that date. Wriothesley required the clerk of the parliament to read the words which the king would have pronounced: *Soit faicte come it est desire*.²⁰⁰ The execution of Norfolk, who remained in the Tower for the next six years, was only

¹⁹⁶ Gammon, *Statesman and Schemer*, p. 127.

¹⁹⁷ *LP*, xxi, (2), 697. Wriothesley, i, p. 177; *Greyfriars Chronicle*, p. 53; Gammon, *Statesman and Schemer*; p. 127.

¹⁹⁸ Norfolk had signed a confession to the allegations in the presence of Wriothesley, Hertford and Dudley. H. Miller, *Henry VIII and the English Nobility* (Oxford, 1986), p. 73, quoting Lord Herbert of Cherbury, *Henry the Eighth*, pp. 565-6; Burnet, *History of the Reformation*, p. 257.

¹⁹⁹ *LP*, xxi, (2), 759. The papers pose the possibility of the word 'creation' being an error for 'creationis' or even 'coronationis'.

²⁰⁰ Lehmberg, *The Later Parliaments of Henry VIII*, p. 235.

averted by the death of Henry on 29 January.²⁰¹ A long line of judicial murders, more or less heinous, had marked Henry's reign, but Surrey's death was not one of them. Wriothesley's role was that of a servant loyally carrying out the orders of his king without regard to any personal prejudice or inclination, though in a letter written to the President of the Flemish Council on 17 December 1546, Van der Delft claimed that Wriothesley had said that it was 'pitiable that persons of such high and noble lineage should have undertaken so shameful a business as to plan the seizure of the government of the king by sinister means... (and that)... they intended to kill the council, whilst they alone obtained complete control over the prince'.²⁰² Despite their shared religious commitment, Wriothesley and the Howards did not have a close relationship, in all probability less close than that between the Howards and other members of the older nobility or that between Wriothesley and Gardiner.

Wriothesley blackened the name of Norfolk and Surrey. It was just what would be anticipated of the chancellor who had the task of presiding over the trial of the foolish earl of Surrey, and the rather more unfortunate duke of Norfolk, and who had his eye upon the future reign and his place within it. To have expressed the slightest sympathy for the treasonable behaviour of Surrey would have been to court complete disaster either then or after Henry was dead. Van der Delft reported to the emperor just before Christmas that 'there is not one of them (Surrey's countrymen) however devoted to them, but regards him as suspect'.²⁰³ Poor Thomas Howard had to suffer for his son's sake, much to Surrey's sorrow, though a confession on the day

²⁰¹ Smith, 'Henry VIII and the Protestant Triumph', pp. 1241-2, suggests that there is a possibility that Norfolk might have been pardoned had Henry lived.

²⁰² *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 531; *LP*, xxi, (2), 568.

²⁰³ *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 533; *LP*, xxi, (2), 605.

before his son's execution intended to save his own patrimony, was a gesture which in the long term probably brought its reward.²⁰⁴

Professor Scarisbrick suggests that the arrest of Surrey might have been promoted as part of a reformist attack on Gardiner and the Howards.²⁰⁵ We may never know what possessed the staunchly Catholic Southwell to initiate the action against the Catholic Howards which was calculated to bring about their exclusion from positions of influence and inevitably damage hopes of a continuation of orthodox religion. The obvious explanation is that he was seeking to establish his credentials with the reformers led by Edward Seymour; there were few if any who did not realise that Henry's death would lead to a dramatic change in the government of the country. Southwell's complaint, resulting from some personal antagonism between him and Surrey, was usefully supplemented by Surrey's own irrational and foolish behaviour.²⁰⁶ David Starkey argues that 'Henry's mind was poisoned against the conservatives' implying that the reformers, Hertford, Dudley and Paget encouraged the king to deal ferociously with Surrey and his father.²⁰⁷ Neville Williams similarly blames 'self-seeking upstarts, personified by Hertford who had spilled noble blood in their thirst for power'.²⁰⁸ That was also Norfolk's view. In a letter written to Henry from the Tower he referred to the illwill shown to him which cast doubt upon his loyalty, 'as doth appear by casting Libels abroad against me'.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 241-2.

²⁰⁵ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, pp. 490-1. This view is shared by Tucker, 'The commons in the Parliament of 1545', pp. 360-90 where it is fully discussed.

²⁰⁶ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 241.

²⁰⁷ D. R. Starkey, (ed.), *The English Court from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London, 1987), p. 116. Burnet, *History of the Reformation*, p. 256, where Burnet comments, 'The Seimours were apprehensive of the Opposition they might meet with, if the King should die, from the Earl of Surrey, who was a high-spirited man, had a vast fortune, and was Head of the Popish party. It was likewise suspected, that he kept himself unmarried in hopes of marrying Lady Mary'.

²⁰⁸ Williams, *Thomas Howard, Fourth Duke of Norfolk*, p. 22.

²⁰⁹ Lord Herbert of Cherbury, *Henry the Eighth*, p. 566.

L. B. Smith by contrast thought that the fall of the Howards was 'largely accidental'²¹⁰ and Redworth concludes that the attack on the Howards was 'determined not so much by the animus of radical courtiers, but rather more by the extent of Surrey's treasonable follies'.²¹¹

The truth probably is that the reformers Hertford, Dudley and Paget helped along the process of attainder by making no effort to save Surrey (who was hell-bent on self-destruction) from his own irrational behaviour. If the reformers did anything they helped Surrey further down the slippery slope that he had chosen for himself. The process by which the Howards fell from grace was a godsend to the reformers coming at the moment that Henry could see his own imminent death. It is not untypical that the accuser Southwell was one of the three sent to arrest Surrey, which suggests an element of conspiracy in the whole process, perhaps even that Southwell had been persuaded to lend himself to a scheme to neutralise the Howards.²¹² Southwell certainly 'shopped' Surrey and abundant *prima facie* evidence was collected by Wriothesley in his subsequent enquiries. An examination of the allegations and the material unearthed provided enough evidence in words and conduct from Surrey himself to justify his conviction.²¹³ It is undoubtedly correct, as Geoffrey Elton suggests, that the control of the privy chamber by reformers gave them enough influence over an ailing king in much physical discomfort, to persuade him to destroy the Howards, though it is unlikely that he needed much persuasion given the

²¹⁰Smith, 'Henry VIII and the Protestant Triumph', p. 1242.

²¹¹Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 244.

²¹²*St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. I, pt ii, 890.

²¹³See *LP*, xxi, (2), 554-5, and for Surrey's trial, 697. See also Casady, *Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey*, an old and not wholly reliable account of the life of the poet and soldier. More research has revised not only some of the facts but some of the conclusions in Casady's book. However Wriothesley's role in the Surrey trial is fairly represented: pp. 184-221.

evidence.²¹⁴ The control of access to Henry and the opportunity to feed him with such information as was appropriate, was enough to achieve their aims.²¹⁵

Conclusion

Writing from London on 10 February 1547, Van der Delft's assessment of the state of the country a few days after the death of Henry, was that there were four 'who will take into their hands the entire direction of affairs. These are the earl of Hertford, the lord chancellor the lord admiral and Paget'. Wriothesley and Paget would 'uphold and sustain' Seymour and Dudley, 'the one perhaps out of fear and the other by reason of affection for the sake of their own preservation and the augmentation of their authority, which must certainly increase, since the others are perfectly aware that without these two they can do but little'. He thought that Seymour and Dudley would enjoy the honours and titles of rulers, while Wriothesley as Lord Chancellor with Paget would 'in reality have the entire management of affairs'.²¹⁶ How different this was from the 'reality' became apparent within three weeks when Wriothesley lost his office and his seat on the council because he 'was sore against him [Seymour] to be made protector whereupon he was put from office'.²¹⁷ It is important to remember that the privy council met at Ely Place, Wriothesley's London residence, for four weeks from 8 December 1546, which suggests that in those weeks Wriothesley felt secure in his office of chancellor and that the council was content to use his home for their

²¹⁴ G. R. Elton, *Reform and Reformation* (London, 1977), pp. 328-31.

²¹⁵ D. M. Loades, *The Tudor Court* (London, 1992), p. 157; D. Starkey, 'The King's Privy Chamber, 1485-1547', unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1973.

²¹⁶ *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 18-21.

²¹⁷ BL., Add. MSS. 48126, Yelverton 141, 15a; A. J. A. Malkiewitz, 'An Eye-Witness's Account of the coup d'état of October 1549', *EHR* (1955), pp. 600-609; A. J. Slavin, 'The Fall of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley: A Study in the Politics of Conspiracy' *Albion*, 7, (1975).

meetings.²¹⁸ There is no clear evidence of the nature of the manoeuvrings in the three remaining weeks of Henry's life; no doubt the higher officers of state watched and waited hoping that there would be no last minute aberration on Henry's part which would upset the status quo.

Professor Scarisbrick seems to suggest that in late 1546 the king may have been toying with the idea of a full-blooded Protestant reformation, but that is at odds with the facts.²¹⁹ Consideration of the king's variable moods, examination of his unpredictable actions, and of the will he prepared at the end of his life, might suggest superficially that he had this in mind. Yet the rejection of Gardiner as one of his executors was a reflection of his assessment of the probable difficulties of managing such an abrasive man in council, not an indication that he did not want a die-hard conservative as one of his executors. The disgrace of the Howards was a direct consequence of their treasonable conduct. The real explanation for Henry's actions during the last few months of 1546 is that he sought to stabilise the country in preparation for the reign of a child of seven years who would need guidance and advice from the broad range of factional interests represented in the executors and assistants appointed by his will.²²⁰ While it has been argued that 'King Henry, according as his counsel was about him, so was he led', the truth is rather different.²²¹ The king allowed factions to gyrate around the throne, seeming at one time to favour one and then the other, while he was always able and where expedient, to call to order

²¹⁸ *APC, 1542-47*, pp. 556-62.

²¹⁹ Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, pp. 476; Professor S. T. Bindoff canvasses the same views in *Tudor England* (London, 1964), pp. 149-50 and Smith challenges them in 'Henry VIII and the Protestant Triumph', pp. 1231-1264. Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 231, n. 1

²²⁰ Henry's first Will was drawn up by Wriothesley in advance of his departure for the French war in 1544. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, p. 488.

²²¹ Foxe, v. 606; Starkey, *The English Court from the Wars of the Roses*, p. 102; Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, pp. 3, 89.

those of whatever faction or grouping in order to enforce his own decisions.²²²

Historians of early Tudor politics continue to disagree about the significance of faction. L. B. Smith takes the view that Henry was able to manipulate those around him, while David Starkey's stance is that by the last months of 1546 the king had fallen under the control of religious radicals.²²³ Peter Gwyn argues that the king was not a sovereign who 'needed to be manipulated for anything to happen' and concludes that Henry 'made all the important decisions and appointments. In every sense he ruled'.²²⁴ Starkey may be correct so far as concerns the last two or three weeks of Henry's reign but the evidence seems quite clear that from October to late December, the king rather than his advisers was wholly in charge, despite his seriously deteriorating health. The outcome was that Edward Seymour 'did not so much seize power as inherit it'.²²⁵ Bernard's lengthily argued case that Henry's religious policy was a conscious effort to chart an 'attachment to a unity based upon the middle way', appears to be an attempt to rationalise the facts, but is at odds with the views of most other historians.²²⁶

The arguments over the impact of factions during the reign of Henry are likely to continue, and probably there will never be a concluded view. The reality is that when it suited him, Henry allowed the impression to go abroad that he was capable of being manipulated, while the evidence also shows that he could just as often impose his

²²² Gunn, 'The Structures of Politics', p. 67.

²²³ D. R. Starkey, 'Intimacy and innovation: the rise of the privy chamber, 1485-1547' in idem (ed.), *The English Court from the Wars of the Roses*, pp. 101-2. 'The King's failure to come down firmly on either side ... screwed faction to such a pitch of intensity by the later years of Henry VIII's reign', The whole issue of the role of faction in regard to religious policy is canvassed by G. W. Bernard, 'The Making of Religious Policy, 1533-1546: Henry VIII and the Search for the Middle Way', *HJ*, 41, 2 (1998), pp. 321-349, in which Bernard notes those historians with whose views he disagrees, (p. 321-2n), namely, by way of example only, Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 299, 346, and E. W. Ives, 'Henry VIII: the political perspective' in D. MacCulloch ed., *The Reign of Henry VIII: politics, policy and piety* (Basingstoke, 1995), p. 31.

²²⁴ Gwyn, *The King's Cardinal*, p. 596.

²²⁵ Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic*, p. 243 n 46.

²²⁶ Bernard, 'The Making of Religious Policy', pp. 338 and 348.

opinions irrespective of the pressure groups around him. As his experience over Blagge shows, Wriothesley found to his great embarrassment in the late 1540s, that he could not easily manipulate the king, just as the Catherine Parr story, even if only partially accurate, proves that Henry was perfectly capable of controlling events as he chose.

Henry was not so ill in December 1546 that he could not take as close an interest in the Surrey affair as he did in his preparation for control of his son's government, so far as that was practicable by the provisions of his will. The circumstances in which that came to be prepared and executed, though not by the hand of the king, have not been considered in this chapter. The contribution of Wriothesley to the new reign and the manner in which some crucial terms of Henry's will were ignored and others were adapted to suit the plans of those who were about to take over government of the country, open our next.²²⁷ Despite all the traumas of the last nine months of Henry's reign, (and the probability of religious advances under Cranmer's and Hertford's guidance), Wriothesley appeared to hold a position of authority and influence which would stand him in good stead under the young Edward.

²²⁷ It is of interest to speculate on the significance of a note on the memorandum of Surrey's offences: 'that Mr. P [Paget] shuld be chanucellour of Englande'. PRO, SP. 1/227, fo. 129, (*LP*, xxi, (2) 555 (18)).

7. Religion and Politics, 1547-1550

Introduction

Henry died in the early hours of 28 January 1547 and the world changed overnight for all those who had a hand in government. His death was not unexpected; for months Henry had been teetering on the edge, one day better and another day worse in health, but always touchy and unpredictable. The colossus had gone and an ordinary mortal, intelligent but quite innocent in matters of state had taken his place. In political and religious affairs there had been much turbulence in the previous twelve months and the implications of a new reign directed by a group of executors, the majority of whom were likely to bow the knee to the Seymour/Dudley faction, was worrying for Wriothesley. It is no wonder that Seymour and Paget whispered together in the gallery as the king's life ebbed away and planned the means whereby they could 'manage' the other executors appointed in Henry's will. Wriothesley, a conservative newcomer, was only on the fringe of the Seymour camp, and was treated with a degree of suspicion; a poacher suddenly (and for how long?) turned gamekeeper.

In the middle of 1546 Wriothesley was viewed as a person of some importance to whom it would be sensible and possibly rewarding, to make obeisance. In May of that year the Lord Admiral, John Dudley, writing to Paget from Leith on the situation in Scotland asked him especially 'to commend me to my lord Wriothesley and to all my lords and friends at your discretion'.¹ Dudley's conventional request recognised that the continuing good will of the Lord Chancellor was important. Since 1540 Wriothesley's authority and influence with the king was thought by outside observers

¹ *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 142.

to be such that it was more important to secure and retain his patronage than that of any other member of the privy council, and to some observers that situation had not changed by the summer of 1546. But the appearances of amity and unity were deceptive and the deterioration of the king's health and uncertainty of his temper coincided with the reformers tightening grasp on access to the king's presence as the year drew to its close. Those of the privy chamber who were committed to reform isolated Henry from contacts which they preferred that he did not have. While it would be wrong to argue that the disgrace of Gardiner and Norfolk was the consequence of a conspiracy engineered by the reformers, the self-inflicted problems of the conservatives gave the radicals great satisfaction and put them in a commanding position in the privy council in December 1546.²

In the midst of the turmoils of the last few days of his reign, Henry's will had been signed on 30 December 1546 by the use of the impressed stamp.³ Despite the growing influence of Hertford, Dudley and Paget, as one of the Henry's executors Wriothesley could have expected to retain the influential office of Lord Chancellor under Edward, and he no doubt anticipated that he would thereby exercise significant influence jointly with the fifteen other executors, pending Edward's assumption of absolute authority.⁴ Early in January 1547, Van der Delft, told the emperor that he expected Wriothesley to continue in the office of Lord Chancellor.⁵ Wriothesley knew

² G. Redworth, *In Defence of the Church Catholic, The Life of Stephen Gardiner* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 242-3, and the references therein ns. 45 and 46.

³ According to Jordan, he, Pollard and L. B. Smith having examined the original will were not persuaded that the document was not signed by Henry personally. W. K. Jordan, *Edward VI: The Young King, The Protectorship of the Duke of Somerset* (London, 1968), p. 55. Not many other historians agree with them. However the State Papers show that eighty-six documents were stamped by William Clerc 'with His Heighnes Secrete Stamp at dyverse tymes and places' during January 1547 in the presence of Anthony Denny, John Gate (sic), Henry's will being the eighty-fifth. The will is dated 30 December 1546. *St. P of Henry VIII*, vol. 1 pt. ii, 897.

⁴ SP. 10/1 no. 10, mentions Inspeximus of the commencement and ending of enrolment of the will of Henry VIII naming the fifteen executors.

⁵ CSP, Spanish, ix, 4.

well enough however that a majority of council members were religious radicals and that the only other committed Henrician Catholic members were Tunstall, Anthony Browne and possibly Nicholas Wotton, and that their influence would be limited, if only on account of their numbers.⁶ The situation at the end of January 1547 could therefore have given Wriothesley very little comfort.

There has been much debate about the terms of Henry's will, the manner and date of its execution, and the degree to which its provisions were almost immediately ignored so as to allow the reformist executors to control affairs of state as they chose.⁷ Wriothesley was opposed to the means by which Hertford was appointed 'Protector' and able to dominate the council in his capacity as 'governor and protector of the king, lieutenant general of his majesty's land and sea armies, treasurer and high marshall of England'.⁸ He feared the expansion of the reforming activities of the council, in which Thomas Cranmer was only one of the determined religious reformers. In Chapuys' opinion expressed in a letter to the queen regent on 29 January 1547, Hertford was an enemy of Wriothesley, and Lisle an enemy of Gardiner, as a result of the 'violent and injurious words' used by Hertford against Wriothesley, and the Lord Admiral, Dudley, against the bishop of Winchester a few months before.⁹ Writing from Vienna, the day

⁶ Jordan, *Edward VI: The Young King*, p. 57.

⁷ E. W. Ives, 'Henry VIII's Will; a forensic conundrum', *HJ*, 35, 4 (1992), pp. 779-804; R. A. Houlbroke, 'Henry VIII's Wills: a Comment', *HJ*, 37, 4 (1994), pp. 891-99; E. W. Ives, 'Henry VIII's Will: the protectorate provisions of 1546-7', *HJ*, 37, 4 (1994), pp. 901-14. See also H. Miller, *Henry VIII and the English Nobility* (Oxford, 1986), and by the same author, 'Henry VIII's unwritten Will: Grants of Land and Honours in 1547', in E. W. Ives, R. J. Knecht and J. J. Scarisbrick (eds.), *Wealth and Power in Tudor England* (London, 1978).

⁸ *APC*, 1547-50, pp. 4-5. David Loades, *John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, 1504-1553* (Oxford, 1996), argues that 'corporate government was unrealistic, even if Henry had seriously intended it' (p. 88), and notes that Hertford should enjoy his office of Protector 'with this special and expresse condicion, that he shall nat do any Acte but with thadvice and consent of the reste of the coexecutors' *APC*, ii, 5-6.

⁹ *LP*, xxi, (2), 347. de Selve, French ambassador, stated that Dudley struck Gardiner in the face at a council meeting. G. L. Pontalis (ed.), *Correspondence Politique de O. de Selve, 1546-49* (Paris, 1888), p. 51.

after Henry's death, but in ignorance of it, the former imperial ambassador thought that Hertford, Dudley and Paget were 'stirrers of heresy' and believed that Catherine Parr was 'infected by the sect which she would not be likely to favour, at least openly, unless she knew the king's feeling'.¹⁰ The inference that the old king was turning a favourable eye towards more reformation may have been no more than a suspicion, but Chapuys was somewhat out of touch with what was happening in England and the close personal relationships which he had cemented over many years, and which gave his reports such credibility, were now unavailable to him.

The current imperial ambassador in England, Van der Delft, knew nothing of the king's death until secretly advised a day or so after, but from the information he obtained, he thought that Hertford, Wriothesley, St. John, Dudley and Paget (in that order), had been appointed 'governors and administrators for his son and the realm', and that Hertford would be the chief of them and was 'in possession of the place before the king died'.¹¹ On 10 February he told the queen dowager that:

'there are four, who according to present appearances, will take into their hands the entire direction of affairs. These are Hertford, the lord chancellor, the lord admiral and Paget. Each of these will strive his best for his own advancement... The lord chancellor and Paget who were in co-operation with them [Hertford and Dudley] before the death of the late king, the one perhaps out of fear and the other by reason of affection will now uphold and sustain them for the sake of their own preservation and augmentation of their authority, which must certainly increase since the others are perfectly aware that without these two they can do but little. It thus appears probable that the earl of Hertford and the lord admiral (Dudley) will enjoy the honours and titles of rulers of the realm, whilst the lord chancellor and Paget will in reality

¹⁰ *CSP, Spanish*, viii, 555.

¹¹ *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 6-7.

have the entire management of affairs'.¹²

Even so he foresaw trouble between Hertford and Dudley 'because although they belong to the same sect they are nevertheless widely different in character'.¹³

As matters stood in mid February 1547 Van der Delft's assessment seemed realistic, though within a month it was clear that he had over-estimated the influence and importance of Wriothesley, and under-estimated the authority exercised by Hertford. Within those four weeks the Lord Chancellor had lost his office. But Van der Delft was not a Chapuys; he had not developed an understanding of the nuances of the court nor fathomed the subtle changes of influence in the privy chamber and the council which had come about over the few weeks preceding and following Henry's death.

Wriothesley's First Fall

As Lord Chancellor, Wriothesley presided over the meetings of the council until 10 January 1547, and four days after Henry's death on 28 January 1547, he announced it and the accession of Edward to the assembled Houses of Parliament before dissolving the session.¹⁴ Most of the members were unaware of the king's demise until three days after it occurred, a necessary deception by Hertford to give time to secure the person of the new king and make preparations for taking control of the government. On 29 January Hertford had written to Paget approving his suggestion that Henry's will should not be disclosed for the time being and then only in part.¹⁵ Two days later, (Edward having been escorted to the Tower by Hertford),¹⁶

¹² Ibid, ix, 19.

¹³ Ibid, ix, 19.

¹⁴ Ibid, ix, 20-2; *APC, 1547-50*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁵ PRO, SP. 10/1, no. 1.

¹⁶ W. K. Jordan, (ed.), *The Chronicle and Political Papers of King Edward VI* (London, 1966), p. 4;

thirteen of Henry's executors assembled there and took an oath to carry out the provisions of the late king's will on a motion proposed by Wriothesley that 'it be resolved not only to stand to and maintain the testament of their master the late king, and every part and article of the same to the uttermost of their power, wits and cunning, but also that everyone of them present should take a corporal oath for the more assured and effectual accomplishment of the same'.¹⁷ The resolution mirrored the testament in which Henry willed 'that our said (council of) executors or the most part of them, may lawfully do what they shall think necessary for the execution of our said will, without being troubled by our said son, for the same acts'.¹⁸ At this meeting Wriothesley advised Edward that the executors were all agreed that Hertford should be governor of the king's person and Protector. Neither Wriothesley, nor Judge Montagu (Bromley being absent), raised any objection to what was proposed despite the fact that the new proposals were clearly contrary to the will. As Grafton put it, Seymour's advancement 'was well allowed of al the noble men sauying of Thomas Wriothesley, Erle of Southampton, Chauncelor of England'.¹⁹ Despite that, Wriothesley, as Lord Chancellor announced that all the executors had agreed that Seymour should be Edward's governor and Protector, as 'it was expedient for one to have governance of the young king' during his minority.²⁰ However the Chancellor protested that the king had intended that all the executors should have equal rights in the country's administration, as the will clearly provided, and that he held his office by a better

J. Hayward, *The Life and Raigne of King Edward the Sixth* ed. B. L. Beer, (Kent State University, 1993), p. 35; SP. 10/1, no. 2.

¹⁷ John Lord Campbell, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, 4 vols. (London, 1846), p. 656.

¹⁸ *LP*, xxi, (2), 634.

¹⁹ R. Grafton, *Chronicle*, 2 vols. (London, 1568), ed. H. Ellis (1809), ii, 499-500; N. Sander, *The Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism*, ed. D. Lewis (London, 1877), p. 171 also claims that Wriothesley alone openly opposed Hertford.

²⁰ Nicholls, *Remains*, 1, lxxvii.

authority than the Protector held his.²¹ Though it was argued that 'the late king intended they should be all alike in administration', the rest of the council, including the conservatively minded members of it, who could see well enough where power resided, gave their support to Seymour and not to Wriothesley.²² The unknown author of the Yelverton MS²³ recorded the disagreement between Wriothesley and Edward Seymour and claimed that 'Wriothesley was sore against him to be made protector'. Van der Delft claimed that he had 'refused to consent to any innovations in the matter of the government beyond the provisions of the will',²⁴ which had been enrolled by order of the council and notwithstanding any hostility to Wriothesley had been given into his custody on 14 February 1547.²⁵ There was a group of council members of which Wriothesley showed every sign of being the leader, which was opposed to Hertford and his plans. It is likely judging by his behaviour over the next two years, that Wriothesley harboured an ambition to remove Hertford from power and influence, though he concealed that ambition successfully while his future depended upon the goodwill of the Protector. It can hardly be doubted however that Wriothesley realised that the weakness of his position compelled acquiescence, while Hertford had the strength in numbers to overawe any opposition.

On 6 February, Paget, Denny and Herbert told the council what they knew of Henry's intentions for the enhancement of the titles of several members of the council

²¹ J. D. Mackie, *The Earlier Tudors, 1485-1558* (Oxford 1994), p. 493; Wriothesley I, 178-80; APC, 1547-50, pp. 3-6, We [the executors] being all assembled together in the Towre of Lunden the laste daye of Januarie... have fully resolved and agreed with oone voyce and consent nat only to stand to and maintaine the said wille and testament... and every parte and article of the same... but that also every of us present shall take a corporal othe apon a boke'. Burnett, *History of the Reformation*, II, 1.

²² APC 1547-50, pp. 7, 63, 67. A. J. A. Malkiewicz, 'An eye-witness account of the *coup d'état* of October 1549', *EHR*, 70 (1955), pp. 600-9.

²³ BL, Add MS, 48126, fo. 15a-b. A. J. Slavin, 'The Fall of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley: A Study in the Politics of Conspiracy', *Albion*, 7 (1975), p. 285.

²⁴ CSP, Spanish, ix, 100-1.

²⁵ PRO, SP. 10/1, no. 10.

who had been appointed executors. Even before Henry's death Van der Delft reported a rumour that Seymour was to be made a duke and that Wriothesley and others 'will all receive accession of title'.²⁶ Paget had created a 'book' of Henry's proposals, though in the event they were not all implemented as the king originally devised. His extraordinarily detailed deposition claimed to set out what the late king had told him were his wishes and intentions for some of the nobility, to elevate some members of the peerage to higher rank, and to create new peers to restore their overall number and status.²⁷ The credibility of the detail given was enhanced by the confirmation of Denny and Herbert, both of whom were chief gentlemen of the privy chamber.²⁸ On 17 February the promotions were effected and Wriothesley was elevated to the earldom of Southampton in accordance with Henry's supposed wishes as expressed by Paget.²⁹ Originally it had been planned that Wriothesley was to have been made earl of Winchester, and possibly even the earldom of Chichester was intended for him though that name was deleted at some stage.³⁰

Under the terms of the will Wriothesley was at first to be given lands to the value of £100 only, but the state papers record the value at £200, and in Paget's deposition it had increased to £300.³¹ Others were less fortunate. When the new dignities were formally promulgated Thomas Seymour (Edward's other uncle) received far less than he thought he deserved, especially as Henry had urged his

²⁶ *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 4.

²⁷ PRO, SP. 10/1, no. 12.

²⁸ S. R. Gammon, *Statesman and Schemer, William, First Lord Paget of Beaudesert* (Newton Abbot, 1973), pp. 131-2.

²⁹ Wriothesley, i, p. 182. The convoluted process by which Thomas Wriothesley at length obtained the title of earl of Southampton is dealt with in H. Miller, 'Henry VIII's Unwritten Will', p. 96; *Holinshed Chronicle*, iii, p. 866 gives the date of Wriothesley's elevation to the earldom as 6 February 1547.

³⁰ PRO, SP. 10/1, no. 11.

³¹ PRO, SP. 10/1, no. 11.

membership of the council. This involved his appointment to the privy council in priority over others whose status in the peerage probably entitled them to first consideration.³² Not surprisingly Thomas Seymour's appointment caused some resentment, but his own indignation was even greater; the disparity between his treatment and that accorded to his brother the Protector Edward, caused bitter jealousy, the consequences of which became clear two years later. Edward Seymour was created duke of Somerset and so we will hereafter describe him.

On 19 February Edward was crowned and Wriothesley bore the sword of state before the king. He had earlier headed the commission to hear and determine claims regarding the coronation, though the important decisions were made by Hertford, Dudley and Paget and the remainder of the executors were persuaded, coerced or bribed into compliance.³³ The French ambassador only had an invitation to attend the coronation by word of mouth from Wriothesley, and the imperial ambassador no invitation at all until it was far too late for him to attend. The ambassadors who did attend 'were not treated satisfactorily. [They] had a great deal of trouble in obtaining seats at all' [at the feast].³⁴ It is difficult to believe that the affront to the empire and France was not deliberately intended, and in his coronation sermon Cranmer showed in the plainest terms the direction in which the new reign was to move in religious terms; 'Your majesty is God's vicerent and Christ's vicar within your own dominions, and to see God truly worshipped and idolatry destroyed, the tyranny of the bishop of Rome banished from your subjects, and images removed.'³⁵ The message and intent were clear beyond any possible doubt and the worst fears of Wriothesley and the

³² *APC*, 1542-47, p. 566.

³³ *PRO*, SP. 10/1, no. 4.

³⁴ *CSP*, *Spanish*, ix, 47-8.

³⁵ *APC*, 1547-50, 29-33; J. E. Cox, (ed.), *Cranmer's Miscellaneous Writings*, Parker Society, (1844-6), p. 126.

conservatives confirmed. Wriothesley despaired at the liberal attitude which the Protector planned and not only in matters of religion. Although the highest secular officer in the land, he lacked both the status and blood relationship to the crown enjoyed by Somerset to be able to influence decisions.

At the end of 1546 to gain the confidence of Somerset and Dudley and to protect his future/ (or so he hoped), Wriothesley had aligned himself with the reformers.³⁶ But the decision of Somerset to change the structure of conciliar government, and Wriothesley's opposition to that was calculated to lead to his loss of office. That occurred in early March 1547 by a process which had some appearance of legality and was precipitated by an act of extraordinary political naiveté provided by Wriothesley himself.

On the same day on which the new elevations among the nobility were promulgated, Wriothesley had issued a commission authorising nominated officers of his Chancery court to sit and determine in his place matters within its civil and common law jurisdiction. The appointment of deputies to preside over the hearings of the Chancery court in his absence while he was engaged on the state's affairs, appeared to him to be a wholly reasonable action and replicated what he had done in October 1544 in delegating to four 'civilians' the authority to hear chancery cases in his absence.³⁷ The only way in which Wriothesley could influence the government was by regular attendance on an almost daily basis at meetings of the privy council.

Wriothesley neglected however to obtain in advance the authority of the council to issue the commission and this failure provoked ostensible consternation and

³⁶ G. R. Elton, *Studies and Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government* 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1974-92), p. 191; Miller, "Henry VIII's Unwritten Will; pp. 87-105. See above pp. 196-200.

³⁷ The power to issue commissions had been exercised by Wriothesley's predecessors, Wolsey, More and Audley. Slavin, 'The Fall of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley: p. 279.

anger in council and among the lawyers. There must have been some secret delight at the opportunity presented by the Lord Chancellor which they might themselves have had some difficulty in engineering. The Protector and the council sought the opinion of the judges and 'the best learned men in the laws of this realm' who between them concluded that Wriothesley had offended against the common law and thereby forfeited his office.³⁸ Wriothesley doubted that there was any lawful reason for his dismissal on the grounds alleged, despite all the judicial opinions and the 'learned in the law' being arrayed against him. Indeed it is far from certain that the chancellor needed the authority of the council to issue the commission, whatever the judges said; within the scope of his inherent authority as Lord Chancellor he was entitled to delegate his judicial powers to qualified subordinates. It was also alleged against Wriothesley that as a civilian lawyer himself, he preferred to employ them and advance them in his service at the expense of the common lawyers, and in a manner detrimental to the common law. That no doubt gave some added emphasis to the complaints made by the common law practitioners and the Benchers of the Inns of Court.³⁹ The judges were probably as much concerned with their job security as they were with the legal niceties of the allegations but concluded that the Lord Chancellor's offence was punishable by loss of office, fine or imprisonment.⁴⁰ The precedents established in Henry's reign made Wriothesley's action completely reasonable, and it must have been singularly galling to have to make his 'humble submission' for an action which was, in his judgement, entirely lawful.⁴¹ The very lengthy justification in the state papers,

³⁸ Jordan, *Edward VI: The Young King*, p. 70. It would be entirely consistent with Rich's nature that he would be on hand to chair the commission to enquire into Wriothesley's misdeeds, to produce the critical report on 28 February and not long after accept the office of lord chancellor. Slavin, 'The Fall of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley', pp. 265-286, at pp. 276-7.

³⁹ Jordan, *Edward VI: The Young King*, pp. 69-72.

⁴⁰ APC, 1547-50, pp. 57-58.

⁴¹ APC, 1547-50, p. 103.

wholly weighted against Wriothesley, gives every impression of being drafted so as to eliminate any opportunity of challenge. The summary was prepared by officials serving the privy council and reflected the demands of that body, supported by the judges and the other senior lawyers whose opinions were canvassed. In the event Wriothesley chose to throw himself upon the mercy of the council, conceding that he had 'by the law merited no less than the foresaid learned men had determined'. He had few friends among the councillors and was aware that they would not be willing to 'decide contrary to the Protector's contention'.⁴²

As a make-weight in the condemnation, it was also alleged that the chancellor had used menaces against those who had advised the council on the complaint against him, employed words critical of Somerset and failed to cite any legal authority for what he had done. There is little cause to doubt that the true reason for the support given to Somerset's recommendation that Wriothesley should lose the Great Seal, was because of his resentment at what Somerset had done and the powers he had taken unto himself in defiance of Henry's will.⁴³ The Protector and his supporters in the council chose to find the Lord Chancellor's action objectionable, as well as unlawful, and used it as a means of ridding themselves of one who was hostile to the Protector, and whose well-known and publicly demonstrated religious views were at variance with Somerset's plans.⁴⁴

The Great Seal was taken from Wriothesley by Edward North, Anthony

⁴² CSP, *Spanish*, ix, 92.

⁴³ BL, *Add. MS*, 48126, fo. 15a-b.

⁴⁴ Slavin, 'The Fall of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley', pp. 268, 271, 285. John Hayward expressed the matter in these terms: 'the earle of Southampton, Lord Chancellor of England, for being opinative (as it was reported) and obstinately opposite to the rest of the Lords in matters of counsaile, was removed both from his office of being Chancellor, and from his place and authority incounsaile,.. this wound of disgrace never left bleeding, vntil it was stopped by the Protector's fall'. Hayward, *The Life and Raigne of King Edward*, p. 36. Grafton, *Chronicle*, ii, 499-500 used very similar words. Loades, *John Dudley*, p. 94, considers Wriothesley's punishment 'totally disproportionate to the offence'.

Browne and Thomas Seymour on 5 March by order of the council, and he was ordered to his London house, 'as in pryson'. Temporarily he remained a member of the council,⁴⁵ but was later able to negotiate a bond to pay whatever fine the king might impose.⁴⁶ In Holinshed's words 'the earl of Southampton, lord chancellor of England, for his too much repugnancy (as was reported) in matters of council to the residue of councillors about the king, was not only deprived of his office of chancellor but also removed from his place and authority in council...'⁴⁷ To Holinshed the excuse used was no more than a cover for the reformers' determination to exclude Wriothesley from the council. To depose one of the most experienced and able members of the council whose reputation and status made him a danger to the Protector's future plans, and probably a focus of religious discontent in the absence of Norfolk and Gardiner was Somerset's purpose. The council records show that after 23 February Wriothesley did not attend any of its meetings and it is at least possible that he might have had some hint of what was intended. Wriothesley's exclusion effectively destroyed any influence the orthodox Catholics might have had over the social, religious and political policies that Somerset was about to implement.

In April 1547 the dowager queen scathingly commented to her ambassador in England, that 'so fickle and inconstant are English people by nature, and judging from the way in which they have commenced with the lord chancellor, that they may possibly treat others in a similar way'. That perceptive view was proved true less than

⁴⁵ The proceedings against the lord chancellor occupy eleven pages of the *APC*, pp. 48-59, which set out in detail the charges against the lord chancellor and the determinations of the judges and 'the best lerned men in the lawes of this realme' in so great detail that it is impossible to conclude other than that the decision to take away the Great Seal was to be justified beyond argument. The allegations went so far as to argue that Wriothesley's commission operated as an alteration or change in the law.

⁴⁶ *APC, 1547-50*, pp. 48-57, 102-3, 237. Wriothesley may have recalled this deep humiliation two years later when Thomas Seymour was under investigation.

⁴⁷ Holinshed *Chronicle*, iii, pp. 866-7. See also Hayward, *The Life and Raigne of King Edward*, p. 36.

three years later. Van der Delft was urged to keep his ear close to the ground and judge the 'trend of public opinion and what the people at large think of the government'.⁴⁸ He sought to rationalise an earlier letter, by concluding that the sudden changes in Wriothesley's fortunes were due to the natural unpredictability of the English people, and at the end of May reported that halberdiers had taken Wriothesley to the Protector's house where there were assembled specifically to interrogate him all the most renowned doctors of the law.⁴⁹ Wriothesley was to be 'summoned and the common people were beginning to look forward with hope to his case'. He went on to say that 'I deemed it advisable at all events to entertain him in his adversity in order not to lose my hold upon him if peradventure he should return to authority again'.⁵⁰ Van der Delft clearly hoped that all the trouble taken in the past to secure Thomas Wriothesley to the imperial cause on political as well as religious grounds, would not go to waste.

A short while later the restrictions on Wriothesley's movements were relaxed, and by June matters had improved further as Wriothesley spent two hours with the Protector, 'paid him great court and left him in very high good humour'.⁵¹ This to Van der Delft seemed to be even more encouraging, but he concluded that Wriothesley was being kept in London rather than being allowed to return to his country house, where he was a neighbour of Stephen Gardiner, to prevent 'these two men from meeting', as together they could well encourage dissent against Somerset.⁵² In the middle of June 1547 the ambassador wrote to the emperor giving the reasons, provided by the former Lord Chancellor himself, for the hostility between himself and Hertford. Wriothesley's

⁴⁸ *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 65.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 65, 69.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 91.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 103.

⁵² *Ibid*, 91.

explanation was 'that the Protector did not obtain by the [Henry's] will the elevation in the matter of titles that he desired, and ascribed this to the influence of the lord chancellor', who 'would not consent to any innovations in the matter of government beyond the provisions of the will. It was in consequence of this... that the Protector who had the other two [Dudley and Paget] on his side and had usurped the royal authority, overthrew the lord chancellor'.⁵³ A few weeks later however Van der Delft's hopes of Wriothesley's status had changed quite dramatically and he had written him off as being no longer of any prime importance, ('there is nothing more said about the former lord chancellor'), though he continued to 'bear his fate patiently', and 'attends the sittings of Parliament everyday'.⁵⁴ The longed-for reinstatement was slow in coming. Belatedly on 28 November Wriothesley received the legacy bequeathed to him by Henry, the day after Rich received his.⁵⁵ Within a few days more Wriothesley was included in a group of members of the House of Lords required to confer with the Commons on the abolition of the heresy laws.⁵⁶ This apart Wriothesley was kept isolated from the world of political and religious activity and appears to have devoted much of his time to his Hampshire estates and property interests, and though restored to his seat on the council in late 1548, he never again held office under Edward.

Meanwhile Wriothesley's former ally Gardiner made repeated attempts to obtain his release from the restraints imposed upon him, without exciting any sympathy from the ruling *junta*. In early July 1547 he wrote a long letter to Cranmer seeking to absolve himself from allegations that he had conspired against him and interestingly

⁵³ Ibid, 100-1.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 148-9.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 197. *APC, 1547-50*, p. 147, where Peckham was authorised to 'deliver vcli to therle of Southampton for his bequest'.

⁵⁶ *Journal of the House of Lords*, 1, pp. 308-9

offers Wriothesley as his witness that he never felt any bitterness towards the archbishop; Wriothesley as Cranmer's 'great friend and most upright... was not ignorant how you had been disposed to me before', he said, and would confirm that Gardiner was innocent of any malice towards Cranmer.⁵⁷ It was a claim both disingenuous and transparently inaccurate. Three months later in October 1547 from the Fleet prison he wrote to Somerset hoping that he might be released from confinement and affirming that 'the Earle of Southampton did many things whiles he was Chauncelor touching religion, which mislyked me not, but yet did I never advise so to do; nor made on him the more for it, when he had done... I left him, to his conscience'.⁵⁸ Gardiner was working very hard to obtain his release from prison, and with Wriothesley politically dead at the time, no one would be likely to challenge such comments. The obvious purpose of these two letters sent to the 'acting' head of the Church of England and the effective head of state, was not only by way of exculpation, in the hope of release from prison but also to distance himself from any contact or connection with Wriothesley.⁵⁹ Though Wriothesley had not at this time been even partially rehabilitated, Gardiner's pleas fell on deaf ears though he was temporarily released from the Fleet in January 1548.⁶⁰

In the later part of 1547 there must have been some softening of relations between Wriothesley and Warwick if no one else, because the latter reported to Somerset in September 1547 that he had become so ill on a visit to Wriothesley's house that he thought it would be the end of him and that he had suffered ever since from stomach problems.⁶¹ The tone of the letter does not suggest that he felt any

⁵⁷ Muller, *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, pp. 325-6.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 405.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 405.

⁶⁰ APC, 1547-50, p. 157.

⁶¹ HMC, *Salisbury I*, pp. 50-1.

animosity towards Wriothesley. On the contrary they were gradually becoming more friendly, and increasingly in each other's company. Towards the end of 1548, upon a visit to Wriothesley, Dudley again complained of feeling ill and not able to eat, and though Wriothesley still felt resentful towards Somerset regarding his harsh treatment in March 1547, he appeared to enjoy friendly relations with Warwick.⁶² The continued friendship was to be important twelve months later. Despite their political isolation, Wriothesley and other critics and opponents of Somerset's regime were allowed to attend the House of Lords without hindrance, and Wriothesley only missed two of thirty-five sittings in 1547.⁶³ Some time during the winter of 1548-9 he was re-admitted to the privy council, the first evidence for which is found in a letter of Van der Delft dated 20 February 1549, recording that a conciliar deputation which included Paget, Petre and Wriothesley was to call upon him.⁶⁴

In mid January 1549 the new Prayer Book passed through Parliament despite the opposition of Wriothesley and eight bishops, who initially withheld their consent, though the former chancellor 'lost his constancy in the end, and agreed to everything shortly before he was reinstated to the council'. So Van der Delft reported to the emperor in a letter of 20 February.⁶⁵ At the cost of sacrificing principle, Wriothesley ensured his return to the privy council, though the precise date is unknown. His signature did not appear on any letters sent out by the council during 1548 (save one in June for which there is no obvious explanation) and the first six months of 1549, which

⁶² B. L. Beer, *Northumberland; The Political Career of John Dudley, Earl of Warwick and Duke of Northumberland* (Kent State UP, 1973), p. 68.

⁶³ M. A. R. Graves, *The House of Lords in the Parliaments of Edward VI and Mary I; an Institutional Study* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 65, 224, 263, n 232, *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 197.

⁶⁴ *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 343.

⁶⁵ *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 345. Ten days earlier he with Paget and Petre had called upon the ambassador Somerset's request to debate some matters in dispute between England and the empire. *CSP Spanish*, ix, 342.

may suggest that he attended council meetings only rarely, though that cannot be determined from the state papers as curiously they do not record the names of those members who attended council meetings from 8 January 1548 until that held on 6 October 1549. From early August 1549 onwards Wriothesley subscribed to most council documents, and that time coincides with the growing closeness between Wriothesley and Dudley and the increasing disenchantment of many members of the council with Somerset's ineffective policies both social, and religious and his almost complete disregard of the council. No doubt as an adjunct to Wriothesley's restoration to favour, the privy council ordered a certain Simon Lowe to restore to the earl of Southampton such things as he held which had belonged to Wriothesley and which he had forfeited when he was removed from his judicial office.⁶⁶ So Wriothesley returned to active membership of the council early in 1549.

The Thomas Seymour Affair

On 17 January 1549, Wriothesley was ordered to attend the privy council and two weeks later with others was instructed to investigate the treasonous behaviour of Thomas Seymour who had been sent to the Tower.⁶⁷ It is realistic to see his involvement in this matter as a sign of his rehabilitation in the eyes of the government. Seymour had married the widowed Catherine Parr probably in July 1547, and quickly found himself a widower in September 1548. Thomas, reckless and headstrong, then made overtures to Mary, who rejected them, and to Elizabeth who was not nearly so

⁶⁶ *APC, 1547-50*, p. 383.

⁶⁷ *APC, 1547-50*, pp. 236, 239, 262. The best modern review of the troubles of Thomas Seymour may be found in G. W. Bernard 'The Downfall of Sir Thomas Seymour' in *idem* (ed.), *The Tudor Nobility* (Manchester, 1992), pp. 212-40.

ready to do so.⁶⁸ Thomas was almost insanely jealous of his older brother Edward,⁶⁹ and despite his appointment as Baron Sudeley and Lord Admiral (at the expense of Dudley), he neglected his duties, intrigued and engaged in piracy and (in the words of the privy council's record), 'wold have layed his handes uppon the persone of the Kinges Majeste and have taken the same into his order and disposicion'.⁷⁰ It was his view that the functions of protector of the realm and governor of the king should be divided between himself and his brother Edward, and the joinder of both those in the hands of Edward was the root cause of his resentment.⁷¹ Furthermore he had publicly announced that it was his intention to make 'a boile or tumulte and uprore' in parliament, and to exploit it for his own ends. That the council realised, would be 'to the great perill and dangier of his Majeste and the subversyon of the state of the holl realme'.⁷²

While Edward Seymour was in Scotland winning the considerable victory at Pinkie, Thomas stayed at home, trying to win over members of the privy chamber; it was later alleged against him that 'by corrupting with giefte and faier promises diverse of the privie chamber he went about to allure his highnes to condescend and agree to the same his most heynous and perillous purposes'.⁷³ He certainly appears to have won over Henry Grey, marquis of Dorset, by promising that his daughter Jane would marry the king and Jane duly joined Seymour's household.⁷⁴ There is evidence that he

⁶⁸ CSP, *Spanish*, ix, 334, 341. PRO, SP. 10/6, nos. 19, 20, 21, 22.

⁶⁹ L. B. Smith, *Treason in Tudor England: Politics and Paranoia* (Princeton, 1986), pp. 21-2. Thomas believed that Edward Seymour's wife deliberately promoted disagreements between the brothers.

⁷⁰ APC, 1547-50, p. 237. The recital of Thomas Seymour's misdeeds is comprehensive, and also identifies every member of the council who was present at the consideration of the allegations against Thomas Seymour. It implies that its decisions were unanimous.

⁷¹ Bernard, 'The Downfall of Sir Thomas Seymour', p. 217.

⁷² APC, 1547-50, p. 248: a similar refrain accompanied each separate allegation.

⁷³ APC, 1547-50, p. 260.

⁷⁴ S. Haynes, *A Collection of State Papers at Hatfield*, (1740), pp. 61-2.

also had hopes of recruiting the earl of Rutland, and Lords Russell and Clinton to his schemes, as well as a determined attempt to seduce Wriothesley from any loyalty he may have felt towards the Protector.⁷⁵ The cumulative effect of many foolish schemes, many wild statements, threats and promises brought matters to a head in January 1549, and the evidence secured, together with proof that he and Sharrington had been milking the Bristol mint, ensured that Seymour would have to be brought to trial. Information upon his treasonable escapades was reported by Van der Delft to the emperor, including the rumours ('he planned to marry the late King's second daughter, and kill the King, the lady Mary and the Protector') of which he had knowledge.⁷⁶

Dudley was certainly hostile to Thomas Seymour, having been forced to surrender his office of Lord Admiral to him, and much resented his demands for greater authority and status. Dudley with others strongly urged the need to deal with this irresponsible and feckless young man, despite his relationship to the Protector, and on 17 January 1549 the council, at the meeting where Wriothesley was present, issued the warrant which Wriothesley also signed, authorising Seymour's arrest and conveyance to the Tower. Wriothesley and Richard Rich were the formidable legal combination which investigated Seymour's offences, and the former's deposition prepared in January 1549 was damning in its terms. He deposed that in the course of travelling to dinner with the Lord Mayor of London, 'the lord admiral said that I had been well handled with my office [meaning that of Lord Chancellor]. I asked him what he meant and said that I was glad to be discharged of it. He said he would have things better ordered. I warned him against attempting violence. He might say he meant well, but would show himself the king's greatest enemy. He might begin a faction and

⁷⁵ PRO, SP. 10/6, no. 11. Details of Seymour's attempts to suborn Wriothesley are given below.

⁷⁶ CSP, *Spanish*, ix, 332, 334, 336, 340, 341, 343, 345.

trouble, but could not end it when he would. He said that he did not mean that. I said that the world believed so, and he were better buried alive than to attempt it'.⁷⁷

Seymour was seeking Wriothesley's support as he tried to enlist that of some others including Clinton, Parr, and Russell. With these he was unsuccessful, if the deponents are to be believed, though he was more fortunate with Henry Grey.⁷⁸ It is improbable that any of those who reported to the Protector their conversations with Seymour were inclined to give him any support even if they sympathised; he was quite simply a dangerous man with whom any dealings were fraught with peril.⁷⁹ Wriothesley's hostile attitude to Thomas Seymour might in part be explained by the fact that on the council's orders Seymour had taken the Great Seal from him, which humiliation had been compounded when it was ordered that the late king's will in his custody was put into the care of the treasurer of the exchequer.⁸⁰ The evidence secured by Wriothesley and Rich was convincing enough to lead to Thomas Seymour's execution, following attainder by act of parliament, despite the Protector's obvious reluctance to acquiesce.⁸¹ Even to the very end Thomas Seymour continued his plotting and drew down upon his head a violent attack from Bishop Latimer: 'he was a man the farthest from the fear of God that ever I knew or heard of in England'.⁸²

Sharington, Seymour's co-conspirator at the Bristol mint, was more fortunate. He was sentenced to death but received a pardon.⁸³ That Wriothesley was thought to

⁷⁷ PRO, SP. 10/6, no. 15. Bernard, 'The Downfall of Sir Thomas Seymour', p. 225.

⁷⁸ PRO, SP. 10/6, nos. 11, 14, and 15. Bernard, 'The Downfall of Sir Thomas Seymour', p. 225.

⁷⁹ Ibid, pp. 221-34, and at p. 225 where it is suggested that the approach to Wriothesley might have been based upon the hope that his resistance to Somerset's seizure of the protectorate in 1547 might encourage him to support Seymour's schemes.

⁸⁰ APC, 1547-50, pp. 57, 59.

⁸¹ According to Elizabeth, 'persuasions were made to him so great that he was brought in belief that he could not live safely if the admiral lived, and that made him give consent to his death'. H. Ellis, *Original Letters*, ii, p. 256.

⁸² G. E. Corrie (ed.), *Sermons of Hugh Latimer*, Parker Society, xvi, (1844), pp. 161-5; Hayward, *The Life and Raige of King Edward*, pp. 83-4.

⁸³ CSP, Spanish, ix, 345.

have some influence again in council matters is shown by the letter which Sharington wrote to him and the earl of Shrewsbury on 20 February 1549, begging for his life.⁸⁴ Whether they were able to do anything we do not know, but after only six months in the Tower, Sharington was released in late October 1549, readmitted to the Commons in the next month and apparently fully rehabilitated.⁸⁵

Seymour and Sharington's defalcations at the Bristol mint did nothing to help the precarious financial situation of the government, principally a consequence of Somerset's commitment to the Scottish war. Indeed Wriothesley's acknowledged expertise in this area may have been one of the reasons for his partial rehabilitation. In March 1549 Paget suggested to Somerset that his talents in financial matters be employed, and that he, Wotton and Walter Mildmay be asked to investigate the financing of the country's affairs: 'yf your graces pleasure were to requyre my lorde of Southampton to take paynes therin youe might slepe the quietlier'.⁸⁶ We have already seen in an earlier chapter how Wriothesley and Paget had worked together so effectively in the mid 1540s to deal with Henry's financial problems. Paget had proposed to Somerset a whole raft of measures to resolve the growing crisis in government and in the country, suggesting that 'my lord of Southampton' should be asked to give of his experience.⁸⁷ Despite that sage proposal there is no record that Wriothesley was engaged in that capacity by Somerset then or at any other time. But

⁸⁴ HMC, *Hatfield, Salisbury MSS*, I, no. 295, p. 70.

⁸⁵ PRO, SP. 10/9. no. 48; 22 October 1549, 'Sir William Sharington: attainted of treason - pardoned'. Wriothesley, ii, pp. 7 and 30. In August 1552 he was described by the earl of Pembroke to William Cecil as 'my friend'. SP. 10/14, no. 57: N. Pocock, *Troubles Connected with the Prayer Book of 1549*, Camden Society, 37 (1884), p. 125.

⁸⁶ B. L. Beer and S. Jack (eds.), *The Letters of William Lord Paget of Beaudesert*, Camden Miscellany XXV (1974), p. 27. This lengthy letter canvassed most of the problems which assailed the Protector at this time including the threatening noises from Scotland and from the west country which three months before the promulgation of the new English Prayer Book, was showing signs of unrest. S. E. Lehmberg, *Sir Walter Mildmay and Tudor Government* (Austin, Texas, 1964), p. 15.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 27, and S. R. Gammon, *Statesman and Schemer, William, First Lord Paget: Tudor Minister* (Newton Abbot, 1973), pp. 148, 153.

that was the characteristic response of Somerset to much of the sound advice offered to him by Paget in 1548 and 1549. Although not obviously active in a political sense in the early months of 1549, Wriothesley had some small involvement in the continuing financial problems of the country, referred to in a letter of June 1549 from Edmund Peckham, high treasurer of the mints, to Thomas Smith. Peckham asked Smith, on Wriothesley's advice, to obtain a warrant to the exchequer or the court of augmentations for money (which the mint was unable to meet), to discharge a warrant for the sum of £2,090 payable to two foreign merchants in Flanders to settle overdue payments.⁸⁸

In early June 1549 Wriothesley was invited to lead negotiations in France but he declined the opportunity on grounds of his ill health (which might have been genuine). There is every reason to see this invitation as further evidence of Wriothesley's rehabilitation. He wrote to Somerset pleading that 'I am so vexed by divers infirmities that the journey would endanger my life',⁸⁹ and received a favourable response, to which he replied by saying, 'you shall never have cause to repent of your goodness to me'.⁹⁰ There is no certain way of knowing whether that comment was sincere or not, but in the light of events in the October following, it can be treated as a diplomatic response and no more. Wriothesley saw the growing prospects of conflict within the council over Somerset's irrational behaviour and realised that his only hope of influencing matters was to remain in England at the heart of government. It is just as possible however that Somerset saw the advantages of isolating a potential troublemaker abroad. Within days the western rebellion had broken out, starting the

⁸⁸ PRO, SP. 10/7, nos. 38(i), 38(ii).

⁸⁹ HMC, *Bath MS*, iv, Seymour Papers, 110. We have already seen that Wriothesley suffered periodic bouts of illness.

⁹⁰ HMC, *Bath MS*, iv, Seymour Papers, 110; *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 385, 398.

chain of events which would lead to Somerset's fall.

The Fall of Somerset and the End of the Protectorate

By the middle of 1549 there was a swelling tide of resentment and hostility towards the Protector within the privy council, which is graphically expressed in the series of letters from William Paget to Somerset.⁹¹ Well before the onset of the summer rebellions of 1549 many councillors had become thoroughly disenchanted. The growing discontent, not least because of Somerset's regular loss of temper and impatience with opinions which differed from his own, prompted Paget to write to the Protector in May 1549; 'a subject in great authority, as your grace is, using such fashion, is likely to fall into great danger and peril of his own person, beside that to the commonweal'. Paget warned Somerset that he should treat other members of the council with greater consideration, should listen to differing opinions with patience and should remember that councillors ought to be encouraged with rewards for their support. Paget's steady loyalty to Somerset throughout the increasing difficulties between February 1547 and October 1549 until support was no longer realistic, is shown in his letters, and he could not fail to see that Somerset's position was hopeless by October 1549.

During 1548 and early 1549, reformation in religion had moved on apace and there was nothing that Wriothesley could have done to prevent it from his isolated position outside the council. By the time he was restored in late 1548 or early 1549, decisions had been taken for the printing of the new Prayer Book in English, its

⁹¹ Beer and Jack, 'The Letters of Lord Paget of Beaudesert'. This volume comprises the Fitzwilliam Collection of Paget's Letters in the Northamptonshire County Record Office, but does not include all the letters of Paget to Somerset at this time; others are to be found in the state papers, and a number of additional collections.

distribution and first use on Whitsunday, 9 June 1549. Within a week thereafter the rebellions in Cornwall and Devon had broken out and inside three months had been put down with great brutality.⁹² The Norfolk rebellion which began ten days after that in the south west was provoked not by religious dissent but was encouraged by Somerset's enclosure policy into an explosion of anger against local gentry. While Russell and Herbert in the west country and Warwick in Norfolk successfully subdued the rebellions and duly received the warm thanks of a grateful and much relieved council, Somerset appeared to be oblivious to the growing conciliar crisis.⁹³

The rebellions had finally ruined Somerset's declining reputation while the stock of Warwick had been much enhanced by his successful reduction of Ket's rising. The dithering, uncertainty and equivocation of Somerset over the Cornish rebellion was contrasted with the campaign speedily and efficiently conducted by Warwick on the other side of the country. While the western rebellion provoked disturbances throughout the southern counties, including Wriothesley's own county of Hampshire, where serious problems arose, energetic action by local magnates were successful in repressing the uprisings. Wriothesley went down into Hampshire (where he was the largest or almost the largest landowner), to deal with the disturbances there.⁹⁴ A little earlier at the end of May, Wriothesley and St. John had written to the mayor of

⁹² See A. R. Greenwood, 'A Study of the Rebel Petitions of 1549', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Manchester University 1990, and H. M. Speight, 'Local Government and Politics in Devon and Cornwall, 1509-1549, with special reference to the South Western Rebellion of 1549', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Sussex University, 1991; G. N. Gibbons, 'The "Prayer Book Rebellion", and the Particularity of the Tudor South West', MA dissertation, Warwick University, 1995; A. Fletcher, *Tudor Rebellions* (Harlow, 1983).

⁹³ F. Rose-Troup, *The Western Rebellion of 1549* (London, 1913); B. L. Beer, *Rebellion and Riot: Popular Disorder in England during the Reign of Edward VI* (Kent, Ohio, 1982); J. Cornwall, *Revolt of the Peasantry* (London, 1977); S. K. Land, *Kett's Rebellion* (Ipswich, 1977); Pocock, *Troubles connected with the Prayer Book*.

⁹⁴ *CSP Spanish*, ix, 397; Nobles were sent to speak to the commons 'each one in that part of the country in which he belongs'. M. L. Bush, *The Government Policy of Protector Somerset* (London, 1975), p. 89; n40; Jordan, *Edward VI; The Young King*, pp. 449-51.

Southampton, warning him that on account of the unrest in the county the steps detailed in the letter were to be implemented to ensure the maintenance of order; 'the watches in eu(er)y towne and boroughe be well kepte'.⁹⁵ The same two in October wrote to the Hampshire county justices ordering them to levy one hundred men for military service, adding to that number 'such others as you knowe for ydell p[er]sonnes geven to lightnes and ill rule'. That may imply that the justices were being encouraged to send off for service some of those who had been engaged in the recently put-down rebellion.⁹⁶ There were suggestions that Gardiner's tenants in Hampshire, as many as ten thousand, would rise and support the rebels in Devon and Cornwall, 'a mosaic of religious and social unrest' as Beer describes the revolt.⁹⁷ The maintenance of law and order was the principal priority of any Tudor government, and Somerset's reforms had encouraged dissatisfaction and unrest and threatened the stability of the state, and members of the government who had landed interests in the troubled areas of England in summer 1549 hastened to organise the local gentry and restore order in their own counties. Inevitably they were hostile to a situation which many believed to be a direct consequence of the Protector's incompetence.⁹⁸

The concern felt in the city of London in July 1549 for the policies of the Protector may be seen in the demand of the court of Aldermen that individual members of the council, including Wriothesley, should 'be bound by obligation to the chamberlain of London for the repayment of such money as the city... shall lend'. The

⁹⁵ K. C. Anderson (ed.), *Letters of the 15th and 16th Centuries*, Southampton Record Society (Southampton, 1921), p. 68.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 74.

⁹⁷ Beer, *Rebellion and Riot*: pp. 155-58.

⁹⁸ L. Stone, 'Patriarchy and Paternalism in Tudor England: The Earl of Arundel and the Peasants Revolt of 1549', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 13 (1973); A. Vere Woodman, 'The Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Rising of 1549', *Oxoniensa*, xxii (1957); D. Willen, 'Lord Russell and the Western Counties, 1539-1555', *JBS*, vol. 15 (1975). Bush, *The Government Policy of Protector Somerset*, pp. 84-99.

hard-nosed merchants had little confidence in the efficacy of Somerset's plans and required a commitment from all the privy council to reimburse any loss they might sustain.⁹⁹ So great was the anxiety over finance, that in August the council sent a letter to Russell instructing him to discharge unneeded troops especially cavalry 'consydering that the horsemen be double charges'.¹⁰⁰

All the indications are that Warwick had been plotting to remove Somerset from his position as Protector even before he had been despatched to put down the Norfolk rebellion; he certainly marches with considerable speed in the early days of October. Moreover there is every reason to suppose that Wriothesley was at the heart of the conspiracy; he was identified by contemporary observers as a partner of Warwick in the enterprise. From his later exile John Ponet had no doubt as to the names of the conspirators: 'Wriothesley, Arundel, and Southwell conspired with thambicious and subtil Alcibiades of England, the Erle of Warwike to pull down the good duke of Somerset out of his authoritie, and by forgeing a great meany of false lettres and lies to make the Protector hated, brought to passe Warwike's purpose'.¹⁰¹ He was equally sure of the identity of 'those who conspired the death of the two brethren [Edward and Thomas Seymour]': Wriothesley, Arundel and Richard Southwell were those who had brought about Thomas Seymour's execution. Warwick had secured the support of the conservative members of the council, Wriothesley, Arundel, Southwell and others whose religious allegiance was equivocal such as Russell and Shrewsbury, in addition to that of those who saw the chaos into which the country was descending.

⁹⁹ *Corporation of London Record Office*, Rep. 12(1), fos. 99-99v and 135-135v, cited in Beer, *Rebellion and Riot*, p. 178.

¹⁰⁰ Jordan, *Edward VI, The Young King*, p. 475.

¹⁰¹ J. Ponet, *A Short Treatise of Politike Power* (Strasburg, 1556), p. 133. John Ponet held the see of Winchester while the deprived Stephen Gardiner was a prisoner in the Tower.

Warwick's containment of the Norfolk unrest had conveniently provided him with a substantial army which could be of use to dislodge Somerset, for which purpose he needed substantial conciliar support. The two commanders in the south west, Russell and Herbert, finally lined up behind Warwick, the one man whose status and prestige (quite apart from his army) made him an alternative to Somerset as head of the council. Wriothesley and his fellow Catholics expected, or had been led to expect as a *quid pro quo* for supporting him, that Warwick would work for a conservative reaction in religion and would not oppose a return to 'the ancient way of worship'.¹⁰² Evidence from Van der Delft suggests that Paget had asked the ambassador to bring Warwick to 'a better disposition regarding religion'. The inference of such a comment is that the ambassador, a committed Catholic, was being invited to encourage Warwick in an orthodox direction, back towards the Henrician settlement. Exasperation with Somerset's policies, which had reached boiling point, ensured that Warwick also enjoyed the support of those radicals whose patience had evaporated. As we shall see, Wriothesley's efforts to turn the religious clock back forced Warwick and Cranmer into unlooked-for co-operation to hold off what suddenly seemed likely to be a threatening conservative challenge to the religious changes introduced since Henry's death. Cranmer's sole objective was to save the reformation, while Warwick came to see that he required Cranmer's help to block Wriothesley's ambition to dismantle the achievements of the Edwardian reformation. But all that was in the future.

The events leading up to the crisis of the 5 October 1549 are well known, and it is only necessary to summarise the situation for our present purposes. Wriothesley and Somerset to all outward appearances had seemed to have been on good terms into

¹⁰² D. Hoak, 'Rehabilitating the duke of Northumberland', in J. Loach and R. Tittler (eds.), *Mid-Tudor Polity, 1540-1553* (London, 1980), p. 47.

July 1549, when the former wrote to the Protector asking him to remember his suit for a house, 'which is now ten times more important than before, both because I am utterly destitute and because unless I know where to rest in the winter I shall not be able to lay in my provision of hay coals, and wine'.¹⁰³ Judged by the size of his family home at Titchfield that plea was somewhat disingenuous. He also asked the Protector the same month to order the release of one Androwes from the Counter where he had been incarcerated for receiving stolen goods.¹⁰⁴

Warwick was frequently in the company of Wriothesley and to a lesser extent that of Arundel, when the crisis developed about the end of September 1549.¹⁰⁵ Van der Delft's report to his agent Jehan du Bois recorded that he had already heard from the princess Mary that there was much rivalry and division in the council and that the earls of Warwick, Southampton and Arundel and the Great Master were working actively against the Protector.¹⁰⁶ Warwick's outspoken criticism of the Protector, according to an eye-witness, had attracted much support from some of the nobility, well before the September crisis developed.¹⁰⁷ Wriothesley was no doubt a party to the secret and unrecorded discussions between Warwick and other councillors, and believed that all the indications implied a genuine change of religious direction.¹⁰⁸ That belief was the cement in their relationship.

In mid September Mary had begun to figure in the plans which were maturing among the conspirators, and according to Van der Delft, Warwick, Wriothesley, St.

¹⁰³ HMC, *Bath IV*, p. 112.

¹⁰⁴ HMC *Bath Longleat MS*, vol. 14, Seymour Papers, 1532-1686, p. 112.

¹⁰⁵ Jordan, *Edward VI, The Young King*, p. 506.

¹⁰⁶ CSP, *Foreign, of Edward VI*, p. 445.

¹⁰⁷ Malkiewicz 'An Eye-witness's Account of the *Coup d'état* of October 1549', p. 603; BL, *Add MS* 48126, fos. 6a-16a, the so-called *Yelverton* manuscript.

¹⁰⁸ Hayward, *The Life and Raigne of Edward VI*, p. 115.

John and Arundel had asked her to lend support to the impeachment of Somerset.¹⁰⁹ The invitation to Mary to throw the weight of her authority behind Warwick was rejected by the princess; had she agreed and the plans gone awry her position would have been very precarious at best and could have destroyed her prospects of the succession. Her view of Warwick as 'the most unstable man in England' may also have influenced her towards caution.¹¹⁰ Her apprehensions about the implications of any attempt to unseat the Protector might have encouraged her to tell the imperial ambassador 'that she desired more than ever to be out of this kingdom for she is unable to believe that religion is to be restored'.¹¹¹ The invitation was significant but her refusal to be involved in any overt attack on Somerset was just as important. Van der Delft also reported a rumour that Mary was to be offered the regency during Edward's minority and as Mary's confidant he was in the best position to know. Her total reliance on Van der Delft for advice did little to discourage some of the council from trying to link her with the rebellions in the west and in Norfolk, which they chose to believe were intended with her covert encouragement, to destabilise the state.¹¹² Three conservatives (Peckham, Richard Southwell and Nicholas Wotton) were added to the membership of the council sometime in early October. Though the purpose of those additions cannot be known for certain, it is reasonable to assume that Warwick made the decision to strengthen the number of Catholics.¹¹³ Council records only

¹⁰⁹ Jordan, *Edward VI, The Young King*, p. 507.

¹¹⁰ CSP, *Spanish*, x, 6. BL, Add MS 48126, fo. 8b, and 10a, 'a pretence that quene Mary sholde be requent [regent] and the Duke to be pulled downe from his protectorshipp'.

¹¹¹ CSP, *Spanish*, ix, 469. This was by no means the only occasion that Mary had expressed a desire to leave England, away from the reformist zeal of the evangelicals, and presumably for the court of Charles.

¹¹² One of Mary's receivers was described in a letter from the council to princess Mary in July 1549 as a 'captain of the worst sort assembled in Suffolk', and in addition there was 'a priest and chaplain of yours, now at Sampford Courtney', where the western rebellion started in June 1549. SP. 10/8 no. 30.

¹¹³ CSP, *Spanish*, ix, 445. It must be unlikely that Somerset being at Hampton Court made the appointments apart from the fact that he would hardly have diluted the reformist numbers on the council, and the assumption is that Warwick did so. Hoak, *The King's Council*, pp. 53-5.

show that their first recorded appearance was on 6 October 1549, by which time the larger part of that body was in London while Somerset and his few remaining followers were with the king at Hampton Court.

In late summer warning bells began to ring for Somerset and a proclamation issued by him on 30 September commanded all soldiers who had mustered, to go to their appointed places and, most importantly, to leave London and its suburbs where they could be a potential for disturbance, and might also form the nucleus of an army available to Warwick. The proclamation produced little response while most of the privy council was in London,¹¹⁴ but it did show that Somerset had belatedly become aware of the moves to unseat him. While he and a few other councillors continued to transact routine business, there was unrest and 'secret consultation for redresse of things', and 'for the displacing of the sayde Lorde Protector'; lords and councillors with their servants, went about armed.¹¹⁵

By 5 October, from which date events moved with great rapidity, it was clear to Somerset at Hampton Court that moves were afoot to remove him, and a letter from the king issued under the sign manual and countersigned by Somerset, called upon all subjects 'to repair armed and with all haste to Hampton Court to defend the king and the lord protector, against whom a most dangerous conspiracy has been attempted'.¹¹⁶ Copies were despatched to justices and other royal officers and calls for military assistance sent to the earl of Oxford and to Russell and Herbert claiming that 'a conspiracy has lately risen against the king and us'.¹¹⁷ Russell and Herbert, still in the west country extinguishing the dying embers of the Cornish rebellion, were urged to

¹¹⁴ P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations* (New Haven, 1964-9), i, 483.

¹¹⁵ *APC, 1547-50*, p. 329. Grafton, *Chronicle*, p. 521-2.

¹¹⁶ PRO, SP. 10/9, no. 1.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, no. 6.

join Somerset urgently at Hampton Court.¹¹⁸ Five successive letters became increasingly more insistent in tone, demanding that they hasten with their armies to defend the king and prevent the 'release of the bishop of Winchester' and the bringing back of 'the old mass'. They showed that Somerset saw the conspiracy as a scheme to restore Henrician Catholicism and sought to play upon the fears of the reformers. Counter-accusations from the council in London followed on 6 October ('the king is in danger because of the treason of the duke of Somerset'), while supporters of the Protector issued 'bills' supporting his actions and urged true lords and gentlemen and the 'poor commons' to rise 'with all our power to defend the king and lord protector against certain lords and gentlemen who would depose the lord protector and endanger the king'.¹¹⁹

Cranmer went to Hampton Court on 6 October to join Somerset and Paget, (as would be expected of a man who could be relied upon to stand by his friends), but primarily his loyalty to the crown took him there, and the fact that he was godfather to the king gave added impetus to his decision.¹²⁰ From Hampton Court on the same day, the king, Somerset and his few remaining loyal supporters had removed to Windsor.¹²¹ The council in London wrote on 7 October to the king suggesting that he should repudiate his uncle Somerset, but it had no effect, as it was never likely to.¹²² That letter was signed by fifteen privy councillors, including Wriothesley who put his hand to letters to sheriffs, justices of the peace, and other royal officers ordering them to

¹¹⁸ Ibid, nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, nos. 10-13.

¹²⁰ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, p. 445.

¹²¹ Jordan, *The Chronicle and Political Papers of King Edward VI*, p. 17. The residue of the council met at Ely Place on 6 October, at Mercer's Hall the next day, at the 'Guylde' Hall on 8 October, then at the house of the sheriff and at the house of St. John on the following days, and Wriothesley was present at all of them. *APC, 1547-50*, pp. 330-43.

¹²² PRO, SP. 10/9, no. 17.

ignore Somerset's demands for troops, and to give no credence to rumours challenging the loyalty of the council to the king.¹²³ The reply to Somerset was begun by William Petre, one of Edward's principal secretaries, but was completed by Wriothesley in his own hand.¹²⁴ Petre had been sent earlier by Somerset to attend upon the council in London to clarify their intentions, and to suggest that they were behaving treasonably. He had remained with them persuaded that Somerset's cause was lost.

The second letter to Somerset on 7 October,¹²⁵ particularising the council's complaints, went by the hand of William Honynges and possibly Philip Hoby.¹²⁶ In reply Warwick received two letters written in the king's name in which the privy council's accusations were rejected and commented that 'we [Edward] have found him [Somerset] so tractable that we trust you may come to a peaceful agreement'.¹²⁷ A further letter indicated that Somerset would not 'refuse a reasonable agreement with the council'.¹²⁸ The Protector wrote in the hope that the London council could be dissuaded from taking any armed action against him and implied that he was willing to seek a compromise, while Paget who was at Windsor, acted as an intermediary with Cranmer's help to prevent the bloodshed which daily seemed more likely. The council's letters expressed its anxiety about 'the dangerous state of the country

¹²³ Ibid, no. 28.

¹²⁴ Ibid, no. 17. The explanation for the change of hand is that Petre needed for his own future safety to indicate in the reply that he had stayed behind in London under pressure from the councillors there, and once those exculpatory words were written Wriothesley was left to complete the letter. See F. G. Emmison, *Tudor Secretary: Sir William Petre at Court and Home* (London, 1961), p. 77.

¹²⁵ PRO, SP. 10/9, no. 22.

¹²⁶ S. E. Brigden, (ed), 'The Letters of Richard Scudamore to Sir Philip Hoby', *Camden Miscellany*, XXX, (1990), pp. 73-148. Sir Philip Hoby was ambassador to the imperial court and had returned to England from the emperor's court sometime during the first week of October, 'before the trouble began'. Between September 1549 and October 1550, Scudamore wrote over 30 letters to Philip Hoby. Scudamore, from Holme Lacy in Herefordshire, had joined the royal household in 1539, and some time before 1549 he entered the service of Philip Hoby regularly providing him with information which appeared to have come from authoritative sources at court. Both Scudamore and Hoby were committed evangelicals as appears from the letters.

¹²⁷ PRO, SP. 10/9, no. 24.

¹²⁸ Ibid, no. 24 (i).

because of the lord protector', while Russell and Herbert told Warwick that 'the people had found bills sown abroad to raise them in the king's name and the protector's quarrel, (and) had we not arrived 5,000 or 6,000 men would have gone to Windsor'.¹²⁹ By 8 October they had made clear to Somerset that their loyalty lay with Warwick and the council in London for which support they later received their material rewards.¹³⁰

On 8 October Van der Delft told the emperor that Somerset had belatedly detected signs that Warwick and Wriothesley were 'brewing something against him', which was confirmed within hours by their seizure of the Tower into which soldiers were put.¹³¹ It is significant that in his letter he bracketed Wriothesley with Warwick, and concluded it by stating that 'as all the foremost councillors are Catholics, it may be that the earl of Warwick intends to range himself on their side'. The hint of a change in the religious climate is clear. On the same day Somerset demanded that Warwick, Wriothesley and others of the court join him at Hampton Court on 8 October, but they delayed their response.¹³² The letter issued under the sign manual created the impression, which was encouraged by Warwick, that Somerset was in opposition to the lords and the privy council, and was attempting to raise the common folk against their betters, perhaps even giving encouragement to the discomforted rebels in the south west and Norfolk who only a few weeks earlier had been dispersed by armies under the control of noblemen, including Warwick himself.

Van der Delft saw as a real possibility that Warwick with the help of the conservatives, would remove Somerset, perhaps offer Mary the regency of the realm,

¹²⁹ Ibid, no. 31.

¹³⁰ Ibid, no. 23.

¹³¹ *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 457.

¹³² Ibid, 456.

return to the Henrician religious format, and dismantle the religious changes brought about by the Protector. Paget as Somerset's main supporter, had no part in the developing conspiracy, though it is not beyond possibility that, political animal as he was through and through, he was already trying to devise a means by which the risk of civil war could be averted, even if that meant the surrender of a terminally weakened Somerset.¹³³ Concerned that despite Mary's disclaimers she might become a focus for discontent, the council wrote to her on 9 October to explain how the dispute between Somerset and Warwick had arisen and asking that she stand with the council.¹³⁴ Some such concern prompted Hooper to write to Bullinger in early November expressing his great apprehension of 'a change in religion... the papists are hoping and earnestly struggling for their kingdom'.¹³⁵ For a short while that was precisely what Warwick wanted everyone, including Wriothesley and Arundel, to think so as to secure their support for Somerset's removal.

Significantly on 10 October Paget wrote to the 'earls of Warwick and Southampton' rather than to all the members of the council as he and Cranmer had done two days earlier. To Paget it had become clear that *de facto* control now lay in the hands of Warwick and Wriothesley, and he gets as close to grovelling as he ever had to in his life: 'besechinge youe to bere with me hauinge my hedde full though I wryte not this with myne owne hand. Thus trustinge to see youe shortely to my great comforte, I... praye God sende youe prosperous health in honor'.¹³⁶ The letter was written in the hope of avoiding the potentially disastrous consequences of Somerset

¹³³ S. M. Jack, 'An Unknown Draft of the October 8th Letter from the Council at Windsor to the Council at London', *HLQ*, 46 (1983), pp. 270-75.

¹³⁴ PRO, SP. 10/9, no. 33.

¹³⁵ H. Robinson, (ed.), *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation*, Parker Society (1846-7), i, p. 69.

¹³⁶ Beer and Jack, 'Letters of William Lord Paget', p. 80.

being proclaimed a traitor and his closest associates being dragged with him into the abyss.

The outcome of all the manoeuvres was predictable. Given the opportunity presented by Somerset's appeal to the common folk for support, with its implications for social unrest, the privy council met at Warwick's house, according to the recently adopted routine, to decide upon its future strategy. Somerset had few fighting troops, but an armed attack by Warwick on Windsor Castle would be represented by him as an attack on the king, so the most realistic action for the council was to discredit the Protector. As a first step, through a proclamation to the nation, which Wriothesley may well have drafted, the privy council made out a fulsome case against Somerset's ill-government of the state, citing his failures in the Scottish and French wars, and his attempt to raise the common people. By claiming that the king himself was in danger from the treasonable activities of the Protector, the council hoped to attract the support of all those loyal to the crown.¹³⁷ 'On ye viijth day of October ye said lord protector wt all hys complices was proclaymed a traytor in London for dyuerse causes then declared in ye proclamacion: and ye tenthe daye ye lord protector was comytted to ward in ye castle of Wyndsor, and after yt vppon Mondaye, being ye xiiijth of October, ye same lord protector was brought from Wyndsoore vnto ye Tower throughe ye citye'.¹³⁸ In their turn Somerset and his supporters summoned 'for the king's service', all those to whom their letters had been sent, calling upon the loyal to come to protect, and if necessary to fight for their king.

Events moved on apace with the defection to Warwick of the lieutenant of the Tower, to be replaced by Wriothesley's long-time friend and associate Edmund

¹³⁷ APC, 1547-50, p. 341.

¹³⁸ J. Stow, *Two London Chronicles*, Camden Miscellany XII, (1910), pp. 19-20.

Peckham.¹³⁹ Opinion in London on the crisis was divided; there were many of the common folk who held Somerset in esteem,¹⁴⁰ but their support would count for little against the forces gathering against Somerset, despite rumours that Warwick was about to restore the old religion by force. 'They will murder the king because of their ambition and to restore popery. They call themselves the body of the council, but they lack the head', read an anonymous bill circulated in London.¹⁴¹ Warwick then appealed directly to Cranmer and Paget, in the hope that the latter who had repeatedly told Somerset that he was encouraging hostility and making enemies, might still be able to persuade the Protector that his situation was hopeless.¹⁴² The council trusted that Paget's vast experience, wisdom and concern for the king and the realm would lead him to find a solution to the *impasse*, which it did.

The stand-off ended on 11 October as Anthony Wingfield the vice-chamberlain reported in a letter to which Cranmer and Paget added their names, that 'according to (your) instructions', he had Somerset in his keeping.¹⁴³ The Protector had realised that the game was up and surrendered. Edward came home to London under the protection of Cranmer, and thereafter his mentor became Warwick. It is probable that the competent Paget with Cranmer and Hoby had negotiated the settlement of a confrontation which for a time had seemed close to sparking off a civil war. In those heady days of mid-October 1549 Wriothesley must have thought that his fervent hopes were to be realised when he was given the task, which he may have relished, of escorting Somerset to the Tower, where Edmund Peckham was instructed to keep him

¹³⁹ APC, 1547-50, p. 332; SP. 10/9, no. 45

¹⁴⁰ PRO, SP. 10/9, no. 11.

¹⁴¹ Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 497-501.

¹⁴² PRO, SP. 10/9, no. 37.

¹⁴³ Ibid, no. 42.

By 13 October the Protectorate was no more and on that date Somerset and Paget were excluded from the council. Gardiner hoping for a sea-change in its attitude wrote to Warwick on 18 October rejoicing in the release 'from the tyrannouse government' of the duke of Somerset and 'the socoure of suche as for want of justice have suffred moche wrong. Amonges whom I am oon of the most notable'. He thanked God that Warwick had become 'a mean for the relief of the captivity and thraldom' of the realm from the incompetence of the Protector, and for preserving his own life.¹⁴⁵ But Gardiner's optimism and hopes of release from prison were not fulfilled.

While Warwick had encouraged the conservatives as allies, and Wriothesley as the leader of them, he quickly saw the conservatives as a threat to his own position. In the words of the emperor in November 1551, 'the Earl of Warwick... showed a wish to bring religion back to the late King's settlement while he was intriguing to overthrow the (said) Somerset.'¹⁴⁶ Wriothesley and his fellow Catholics in the council were ultimately to be bitterly disappointed, once Warwick realised that the only real hope for his future lay with a continuation of the religious policy implemented from 1547 onwards. The acceptance of that view necessitated Somerset's early release from the Tower, and the continued confinement there of both Gardiner and Norfolk.¹⁴⁷ On 17 October however, Van der Delft confidently expected the restoration of the 'true

¹⁴⁴ Stow, *Two London Chronicles*, pp. 19-20. Wriothesley, ii, pp. 26-7. SP. 10/9, no. 45.

¹⁴⁵ J. A. Muller, *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner* (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 440-1.

¹⁴⁶ CSP Spanish, ix, 458 and x, 397. The letter was written to Jehan Scheyfve advising him of the information given to the emperor by Van der Delft who had received it from Wriothesley own mouth.

¹⁴⁷ H. James, 'The Aftermath of the 1549 *Coup* and the Earl of Warwick's Intentions', *HR*, 62 (1989), pp. 91-7. The duke of Norfolk claimed that he had become 'as good a chrystyan as any yn England'. His 'cloked relygyon with much dissymulacyon' was a front by 'some of the old sort to the entent to make theyre part the stronger'.

religion', in his estimation one of the main aims of the *coup*. 'Every man among them [the council] is now devoted to the old faith, except the earl of Warwick, who is none the less taking up the old observances again day by day, and it seems probable that he will reform himself entirely'.¹⁴⁸ If that was correct Wriothesley and Arundel must have felt very much encouraged by the course of events. In his recent biography of Dudley, David Loades underestimates the efforts being made for a restoration of the 'true religion' and his suggestion that 'there are no other signs from contemporary evidence' for Wriothesley's enthusiasm for the 'old religion' hardly squares with the facts.¹⁴⁹ A letter from Scudamore of 5 December thought however that 'the most parte of the Counsell (...) favoureth goddes word'.¹⁵⁰ While the majority of members of the privy council were conservatives, the executors of Henry's will who would determine future policy were not, and the distinction was crucial to Warwick's success. The crisis over the Protectorate was ended within ten days and all the evidence suggests that Wriothesley was beside Warwick during that period, sharing authority and all the decision-making in council. Parliament was inert; 'they do almost nothyng butgeave the lokyng ther one ouer thother'.¹⁵¹ Wriothesley however was deceived or deceived himself into thinking that he was now a power in the land, and was soon disabused of his expectation of a return to a central position of influence and authority which had been taken away from him in March 1547.

With the arrest of Somerset there followed a redistribution of responsibilities among the councillors on 31 October and supervision of the mints (a reflection of his financial expertise perhaps), and responsibility for the Isle of Wight and Portsmouth,

¹⁴⁸ *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 462-3.

¹⁴⁹ D. M. Loades, *John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, 1504-1553* (Oxford, 1996), p. 141.

¹⁵⁰ Brigden, 'Scudamore's Letters to Hoby', pp. 97, 114.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 97-8.

almost his bailiwick, were handed over to the experienced hands of Wriothesley.¹⁵² This must have been much less than he had expected, and was perhaps intended to isolate him the seat of power in London. However security was important and there were fears of further raids in the Solent area by the French. There had been rumours that the mass was to be restored, which Wriothesley confidently expected, but matters were not going well and he absented himself from some meetings of the council for a time after the end of October on the excuse that he was unwell, which may have been true. Edmund Peckham, who had been appointed as lieutenant of the Tower at the beginning of October 1549, was replaced within a month. If Warwick was then contemplating the elimination of the conservative influence in the council he would certainly not want the Tower to be under the control of a Catholic sympathiser. There is ample evidence of the close relationship between Wriothesley and Peckham over a period of twenty years,¹⁵³ and that relationship could have been dangerous to Warwick with Peckham at the Tower. David Loades is incorrect in suggesting that Peckham 'disappeared' after 30 October, though correct in saying that 'he may have been a patron of Southampton'.¹⁵⁴ Within only a few weeks after Wriothesley had taken Somerset to the Tower while there were indications that matters were progressing slowly for the conservatives. The returning confidence of the reformers led Richard Hilles in mid November to hope 'that Christ may yet remain with us'.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² PRO, SP. 10/9, no. 50,

¹⁵³ Peckham was one of Wriothesley's executors and related to him by marriage; they each married daughters of John Cheyne of Chesham Bois. See above p. 19, and Appendix 3, p. 311.

¹⁵⁴ Loades, *John Dudley*, p. 143.

¹⁵⁵ Richard Hilles to Henry Bullinger, 17 Nov. 1549, *Original Letters*, i, p. 268.

The Last Fall of Thomas Wriothesley

For a period in October and early November 1549, Wriothesley, Arundel, the Arundel knights, and the Southwell brothers, Richard and Robert, were influential in council affairs with Wriothesley and Arundel being appointed two of the six peers entrusted with the king's safety after Somerset's fall.¹⁵⁶ However the appointment to the privy council at this time of vigorous reformers such as Thomas Goodrich, bishop of Ely and Henry Grey, marquis of Dorset, gave the clearest indication that the protestant view was likely to prevail,¹⁵⁷ although Van der Delft still thought in early November that Wriothesley was in charge. 'He is lodged at court, where a great number of lords' were calling upon him and he still had 'most authority with the earl of Warwick'.¹⁵⁸ Ponet, that rabid protestant, believed that 'Wriothesley that before was banished the Court, is lodged with his wife and sonne next to the king: Euery man repaireth to Wriothesley, honoureth Wriothesley, sueth unto Wriothesley... and all thinges be done by his advise, and who but Wriothesley'.¹⁵⁹ If those assessments were accurate it could suggest that there was a widespread view that a return to the old Catholic faith was possible, and that Wriothesley was the man to bring it about.

The emperor's ambassador was optimistic of the outcome in religious terms and even thought that Bonner and Gardiner would be released from confinement. It did not happen.¹⁶⁰ At the end of November Wriothesley (whose health seems to have been deteriorating), postponed an interview that he Warwick and Arundel were to have had with Van der Delft, because of the illness of both Warwick and Arundel.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ D. E. Hoak, *The King's Council in the Reign of Edward VI* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 249.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 55. Henry Grey was sworn on the 29 November.

¹⁵⁸ CSP, Spanish, ix, 467-470.

¹⁵⁹ Ponet, *A short treatise of politike power*, p. 131-2.

¹⁶⁰ CSP, Spanish, ix, 458, 460; C. Sturge, *Cuthbert Tunstal*, (London, 1938), p. 283.

¹⁶¹ CSP, Spanish, ix, 476.

While it ultimately took place in the absence of those two, the real reason for the deferment is obscure though it might be that Wriothesley was concerned lest it be thought that he was acting independently of Warwick, soon to be president of the council. Van der Delft had his meeting with him somewhat later and found it entirely unsatisfactory, leading him in the end to tell Warwick that the late king had never wished to go as far as the current council had done, and that Henry had left behind him councillors for his son nominated in the will, not to act as 'kings of the country' who might, according to their whim or fancy, change things with which no king or prince in the world had ever tampered 'but to his ruin'. Van der Delft suspected some deception because Warwick would only see him at his house, leading the ambassador to fancy that his alleged illness was a 'blind' to enable Warwick to transact council business in private at his house at Ely Place, where the members would be more amenable to his influence.¹⁶² While we have no means of knowing for certain it is reasonable to assume that by the end of November Warwick had decided (without confiding in Wriothesley *et al.*) that there would be no return to Henrician Catholicism. Certainly the hopes of the conservatives had been gradually reducing over the last two weeks of November.

At the same time critical opinions were being expressed of Warwick and his plans. He had been described to Van der Delft by princess Mary as 'the most unstable man in England'; the conspiracy against the Protector, she believed, had 'envy and ambition for its only motives'. The conspirators were equally guilty, 'having given him [Somerset] their advice and consent'. The long term implications of Warwick's plans in her view, were such that 'no good will come of the move... but that it may be only a

¹⁶² Ibid, 476.

beginning of our misfortunes'.¹⁶³ Richard Scudamore's letter of 27 November to Philip Hoby, also recorded that Wriothesley had ceased to attend council meetings due to an illness, apparently genuine. A similar indisposition kept Warwick away from the council chamber.¹⁶⁴ All the members with the exception of the 'Erle of Southampton, who lyeth syke at his howse in London, and, as some saye, verye wilde', had assembled at the house of Warwick ('who kepith his howse for that he is troubled with a rume').¹⁶⁵ It must have been about this time that Wriothesley finally lost the struggle with Warwick for the primacy in the council, and the appointment of Goodrich to the privy council may mark the date.¹⁶⁶ The day before Scudamore's letter, Van der Delft had written to the emperor and warned him that

the earl of Southampton is very ill and in danger of death. If he were to fail us now I should fear matters might never be righted, for he is still in good hopes of accomplishing this, and a good part of the council is now well disposed, but would go astray and follow the rest without him, for there is not a man among them of sound enough judgement to conduct opposition. So if the earl of Southampton does not recover, and the earl of Warwick remains stiff in his opinion, we shall see terrible confusion and destruction in this realm.¹⁶⁷

The ambassador saw Wriothesley as the only one capable of bringing about the religious change for which that the emperor hoped, and believed that there were realistic expectations of a change in the religious climate in England under his guidance. If Van der Delft's judgement was correct then Wriothesley had been heading a campaign to restore the old religion with the knowledge, consent and support of the emperor and his ambassador in England, and possibly even with the

¹⁶³ Sturge, *Cuthbert Tunstal*, p. 283: *CSP, Spanish*, x, 6. Van der Delft also thought that Warwick was 'a very changeable and unstable person'. *CSP Spanish*, ix, 489.

¹⁶⁴ Brigden, 'Scudamore's Letters to Hoby', p. 93.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 93.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 96, and *n.* 61.

¹⁶⁷ *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 477; Hoak, *The King's Council*, p. 253;

covert encouragement of Mary.

A week later Scudamore sent an important letter to Hoby, in which he told him of the happenings of the previous few days, having obtained the facts directly from Warwick himself (who 'kepyth yett his chamber'). Warwick planned the re-allocation of the offices within the council in the light of the information he had received about the intentions of some of the members of it, especially Wriothesley, Arundel and Paget. Suddenly a crisis developed. A conspiracy by Wriothesley and Arundel had been uncovered and the council had been gathered together, (according to Scudamore's long letter to Hoby on 5 December), without Arundel, ('the cause of whose absens I can not lern'), and Wriothesley ('who abydeyth styll syke yn his house').¹⁶⁸ Van der Delft thought that St. John, to no one's surprise, but also Rich and Russell, 'who still held to the good faith', seeing Warwick's determination, had abandoned Wriothesley's group and gone over to Warwick's side, and an unidentified informant had told Van der Delft that 'Southampton could not check Warwick's party single-handed'.¹⁶⁹ On 26 December according to the same writer Wriothesley was still 'contynually syck and thought to be yn a consumpsyon'. That would not be surprising as the rumour was circulating that Somerset was about to be released and (to quote Scudamore), 'whate a ,corrozye this wilbe to the Erle of Southampton'.¹⁷⁰ Paget saw likewise that his future also lay with Warwick, not with the Wriothesley/Arundel camp, and his support in the defeat of those two was important in Warwick's success and was duly recognised by his elevation to the House of Lords as Lord Paget of Beaudesert at the beginning of December 1549 (or possibly the middle of January), though it may well also have been

¹⁶⁸ Brigden, 'Scudamore's Letters to Hoby', p. 95. Hoak, *The King's Council*, pp. 59-60, 246-51.

¹⁶⁹ *CSP, Spanish*, x, 8.

¹⁷⁰ Brigden, 'Scudamore's Letters to Hoby', 26 December 1549, at p. 104.

a reward for his influence in obtaining Somerset's peaceful submission in October.¹⁷¹

The swearing in of Goodrich and Henry Grey as members of the council strengthened Warwick's hold over it¹⁷² and while the appointment of those two had put 'all honest hartes yn good comfort', there was some apprehension about rumours 'for the delyveraunce of the late duke of Norfolke the which was almost brought to passe by the ernest suytt of my ladye of Richmond[Norfolk's daughter]'. The balance of power had tilted firmly back towards the reformers, according to Scudamore's letter of 5 December, but there seemed a real expectation by some that Norfolk might be released from prison, a measure of their hope that a change in religion was to come about, confirmed by the fact that the 'ladye of Ruchemond hath gotten lycence of the counsell that she may haue accesse to hir ffather'.¹⁷³ Confirmation of that is contained in a letter written a week later in which Scudamore said that Arundel might be given the office of Lord Chamberlain.¹⁷⁴ It was a time of persistent but contradictory rumours, one anticipating a return to the old Catholic forms of worship and just as often another confidently expecting the forward progress of reformation. Similarly Warwick appeared one day as pre-eminent in the council and on another day Wriothesley seemed the most important. Even those close to the heart of government were uncertain of the final resolution.

By 15 December Wriothesley had sufficiently improved in health to be able to interrogate Somerset 'with many of the counsell (who had) ben dyuers tymes this weke at the Towre with the Duke of Somersett. But howe so euer the world shall goo the

¹⁷¹ *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 467-70. The date of his elevation was 19 January 1550; Gammon, *Statesman and Schemer*, p. 169, states that this took place on 3 December, though other views suggest 19 January 1550 which accords with Wriothesley, ii, p. 31.

¹⁷² Brigden, 'Scudamore's Letters to Hoby', pp. 96-7; Loades, *John Dudley*, p. 142.

¹⁷³ Brigden, 'Scudamore's Letters to Hoby', p. 102.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 98; Ponet, *A short treatise of politicke power*, 1, iii.

prisoners are indifferent merry'.¹⁷⁵ That day proved to be one of the most critical of Wriothesley's life. An anonymous source has alleged that Wriothesley was determined to harass Somerset to death if he could do so in revenge for past injury, and subsequent events appear to bear out this ambition.¹⁷⁶ The response of Somerset to the interrogation by Wriothesley and the others was that he had done nothing except with 'the advise, consente and counsell of the earle of Warwicke'.¹⁷⁷ (As we have already seen, that same view was expressed by Mary to Van der Delft.) This was sweet music to the ears of Wriothesley in whose eyes Warwick was now firmly linked to Somerset as his accomplice in the errors, misjudgements and failures of the previous three years of the Protectorate. Wriothesley, 'being hote to be rewenged of the both for olde groges paste whan he lost his office', is alleged to have said, 'I thoughte ever we sholde fynde them traytors both; and both is worthie to dye for by my advyse. My lord of Arrundell in lyke manner gave his consente that thei were bothe worthie to dye and concluded there that the day of execution of the lord protector the earl of Warwicke sholde be sent to the toward [Tower] and have as he had deserved'.¹⁷⁸

Wriothesley and Arundel showed their determination to threaten Warwick's life as much as that of Somerset, and to attempt to restore the old Catholic religion; with both Warwick and Somerset out of the way there was a realistic chance of success. They either confided their feelings to Lord St. John, or (as some say), he was present at the examination of Somerset and heard the conversation between Wriothesley and Arundel.¹⁷⁹ Though a conservative, St. John had the wit to see the implications of what the plotters intended and perhaps the way it could be used to his advantage. He

¹⁷⁵ Brigden, 'Scudamore's Letters to Hoby', p. 101.

¹⁷⁶ BL, *Add MS*, 48126, fo. 6a-16a.

¹⁷⁷ BL, *Add MS*, 48126, fo. 15v. Hoak, *The King's Council*, p. 255.

¹⁷⁸ James, 'The Aftermath of the 1549 Coup', pp. 91-7.

¹⁷⁹ Loades, *John Dudley*, p. 144.

went immediately to Ely Place and reported to Warwick exactly what Wriothesley had threatened and what Arundel had approved.¹⁸⁰ It is however at first sight difficult to understand Arundel's agreement to Wriothesley's proposals, as Warwick considered him as one of his allies, but it can safely be assumed that Arundel thought that he saw the chance of a reversion to the Catholicism of Henry's time and that hope overrode his allegiance to Warwick and his own better judgement.¹⁸¹

St. John's information persuaded Warwick that his own safety depended upon Somerset's release from the Tower and re-admission to the council, and he therefore called a meeting of the council on 11 or 12 December at his home in Holborn to discuss Somerset's situation. Only two or three days had elapsed between Wriothesley's threat against Somerset and Warwick's calling of the meeting of the council, but it was time enough for Warwick to prepare himself. We can assume that Warwick played upon the fears of the councillors that a reversion to Henrician Catholicism was a recipe for disorder on a national scale, two dangerous rebellions and countless smaller uprisings having only recently been put down with the ringleaders still in prison awaiting punishment.¹⁸² Warwick prepared the ambush, having assembled his supporters, and in ignorance of that, Wriothesley proposed to the council 'how worthie the lord protector was to die and for how many high treasons'. 'The earle of Warwicke hearing his owne condemnation to approche, with a warlyke wisage and a long fachell by his syde, laye his hand thereof and said "my lord you seeke his bloude and he that seekethe his bloude wold haue myne also"'.¹⁸³ It must have come as an appalling shock to Thomas Wriothesley to be immediately rejected by Warwick and

¹⁸⁰ *CSP, Spanish*, ix, 489. Warwick 'bente him selfe all he colde to save the protectors lyfe'.

¹⁸¹ James, 'The Aftermath of the 1549 Coup', p. 94.

¹⁸² Four of the leaders of the western rebellion were executed at Tyburn on 27 January 1550.

¹⁸³ BL, *Add MS*, 48126, fo. 16a; Hoak, *The King's Council*, p. 256.

told that those who wanted to take Somerset's life would also take his.¹⁸⁴ The meeting broke up in some disorder. The confrontation was decisive, and signalled the end of Wriothesley's career and with it any hope of a reversion in Edward's reign to the old religious regime of Henry's.

There were twenty-four privy councillors in office on that day, eleven of them were Henrician Catholics or sympathisers and included Rich, St. John and Russell.¹⁸⁵ Those numbers did not avail Wriothesley and any support which he might have hoped for failed to materialise at the critical moment. Warwick being warned in advance by St. John, had no doubt intimidated or won over the ambivalent members of the council.¹⁸⁶ Wriothesley's miscalculation in failing to ensure he had the support he needed can only be put down to political naiveté, an accusation which could be made equally of his error in March 1547. He had thought a few weeks previously that Warwick would retrace his steps from the position reached with the introduction of the new Prayer Book, would keep Somerset close confined, or perhaps have him executed as a traitor, would release Gardiner and restore the deprived bishops. There had been a public rumour suggesting the imminent release of the duke of Norfolk and Courtenay, the earl of Devon,¹⁸⁷ but there is no evidence that Wriothesley had gathered about him any significant support within the council for his attack upon Somerset. Perhaps he simply relied upon the committed conservatives and disaffected reformers on the council as sufficient.

There were some who had interpreted the earlier moves in the direction of a religious conservative revival as being no more than a charade. Dryander was

¹⁸⁴ Loades, *John Dudley*, p. 145; Hoak, *The King's Council*, p. 251.

¹⁸⁵ *CSP, Spanish*, x, 8.

¹⁸⁶ St. John was created earl of Wiltshire on 19 January 1550, presumably a reward for his support for Warwick.

¹⁸⁷ Brigden, 'Scudamore's Letters to Hoby', p. 97. Muller, *Letters of Stephen Gardiner*, p. 440.

confident, he told Bullinger, that he had detected 'the outward and deplorable appearance of the change, but the purposes of the leaders are well known to me'.¹⁸⁸ His meaning is clear; Warwick was only acting out a pretence. On the other hand in early November, Hooper feared an alteration in religion with Somerset in the Tower, though within a month his mood was more optimistic.¹⁸⁹ It cannot be doubted that Wriothesley had been overtaken by the speed of Warwick's reaction to the threat to Somerset's life, and there was to be no conservative revival in England on the Henrician model. Further disasters were soon to follow for the former Lord Chancellor. Arundel had been appointed Lord Chamberlain but he speedily lost this office when his loyalty became so clearly suspect. As he was 'constantly about the person of the king' he had to go, and Paget helped the process in revenge for Arundel's hostility towards him when Paget was thought in the previous October to have helped Somerset against the remainder of the council in London.¹⁹⁰

To put the seal once and for all upon the plans for further reformation of the church, a statement was delivered to the bishops on Christmas Day which required them to destroy all other service books which 'would prevent the use of the Book of Common Prayer' and made clear beyond any doubt that the power struggle in the council had been resolved unequivocally in favour of the reformers.¹⁹¹ Van der Delft was clear by 14 January that an alliance between Somerset, Paget and Warwick (the triumvirate again?) had unseated Wriothesley, and that St. John and Russell had defected to Warwick out of ambition and envy of Wriothesley. There is nothing

¹⁸⁸ Robinson, *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation*, i, p. 353.

¹⁸⁹ 'My patron [Somerset]... is now imprisoned with others in the Tower. We are greatly apprehensive of a change in religion', *ibid*, p. 69. 'No change in religion has taken place, and we hope that no alteration will be made hereafter', *ibid*, p. 72. See p. 199 above.

¹⁹⁰ *CSP, Spanish*, x, 8.

¹⁹¹ *PRO, SP 10/9*, no. 57.

remarkable or improbable about such an assessment. It was certain that Somerset would be released from the Tower as he was required to strengthen the reformers on the council against the Catholics who they intended 'to persecute and crush entirely out of existence'.¹⁹²

On 19 January 1550, St. John was created earl of Wiltshire and Russell became earl of Bedford. The conclusion is inescapable that the two of them were appropriately rewarded not only for the warning given to Warwick, but for the moral authority and political support that they were able to provide for him at this critical time. Both had earlier been waverers, uncertain of their religious loyalty up to the date of the critical meeting at Warwick's residence. Thereafter their views were never in doubt. A few days later Paget was raised to the peerage. At the end of January Somerset was released from the Tower.

Despite what had happened, even in the middle of January Van der Delft could still write to the emperor that Wriothesley was thought capable of some effective action: 'there is... little hope of good government, there being nobody of good judgement after the Earl of Southampton except Paget, who cannot please everybody, and [Gardiner who] is still a prisoner without hope of release'.¹⁹³ Scudamore whose reports of the dramatic events of the last few weeks of 1549 are so vivid, accurately judged that the contest between Warwick and Wriothesley was wholly about religion. The prospect of a restoration of the old Catholic liturgy was what was at stake, and at

¹⁹² *CSP, Spanish*, x, 7. Van der Delft's letter to the emperor on 14 January 1550 summarises the whole exercise. 'Warwick... perceiving himself to be held in less esteem than [Somerset]... made a bargain with the Earls of Arundel and Southampton, who belong to the good religion, to remove the Protector from power, and make common cause with all the followers of the ancient religion, who took leading parts in the plot. Once having obtained their object, and perceiving that the majority in the Council were Catholics they (*sic*) threw off the mask and dropped all pretence. By supporting the sects he (*sic*) drew to his side the young lords and those who had something to fear from the past, Paget among them, because of their great friendship for the Protector'.

¹⁹³ *CSP, Spanish*, x, 10.

the heart of the issue had been the problem of what to do about Somerset. That had now resolved and he was released; Parliament rejected the option of his attainder, and instead a bill for his fining and ransoming was introduced on 2 January 1550 and passed through both houses by 14 January. No doubt there was an implied assurance that the financial penalties would in due time be remitted. The same day Van der Delft wrote to the emperor summarising the way matters had progressed as he saw them. Warwick, he said, had made a bargain with Wriothesley and Arundel, 'who belong to the good religion', to remove the Protector from power and make common cause 'with all the followers of the ancient religion, but there is bitter strife among them'.¹⁹⁴ Events followed each other with so great rapidity that Van der Delft's news was out of date long before it reached the emperor. On this occasion it was incorrect even as the ambassador penned the letter.

Scudamore's report to Hoby on 11 January stated that 'immedyatly after my wryting of my last letters unto yow ther hapened a sodayne chaynge amongst the counsell, for the Erle of Southampton was comaunded sodenlye (lyeng before sycke yn the courte) to departe from thens and to repayre to his howse yn holborn and enyoyened ther to remayne'.¹⁹⁵ All this news Van der Delft reported in the letter to the emperor on 14 January, adding that Wriothesley 'seeing the way the wind was blowing, withdrew immediately before the order to do so could be sent to him; he feared the grief of seeing this kingdom so misgoverned and ill-treated would kill him'.¹⁹⁶ Indeed the imperial ambassador was concerned that an order might be made sending Wriothesley to the Tower.¹⁹⁷ The earl of Arundel was imprisoned at his home

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 7.

¹⁹⁵ Brigden, 'Scudamore's Letters to Hoby', p. 107.

¹⁹⁶ *CSP, Spanish*, x, 8.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 21.

on rather improbable grounds and sentenced to pay an enormous fine, 'of which he was after released',¹⁹⁸ though Warwick humbled Arundel by making him wait 'two full hours outside his room'.¹⁹⁹ Scudamore wrote to Hoby on 18 January and reported that the 'the Erle of Southampton seyth (although he had sodeyn warnyng to departe from the courte) that he was not commanded to kepe his howse, and that he was ffurther assured that neyther the kyng nor his counsell had conceaued any displeasure towards him'.²⁰⁰ Whether that be correct or not, and it may be that the council no longer saw him as a significant threat, Wriothesley had lost the battle and the war.

The explanation for the failure of Warwick and the council to take more severe measures against Wriothesley, given that his actions could only be regarded as treasonable, was that his state of health made him a spent force while his total loss of all credibility emasculated any hopes he might have had of further action. Gardiner and Norfolk continued to live under a cloud of suspicion and distrust and the recalcitrant bishops Bonner, Thirlby and Heath were not restored to their sees. Something far more dramatic than anything Wriothesley could do would be needed to unseat Warwick, though Somerset tried in the following June, releasing Gardiner temporarily in Warwick's absence from court.

Throughout January 1550, Scudamore kept Hoby abreast of developments in England, in Parliament and especially in the privy council. He reported on 25 January that Wriothesley had been commanded 'to kepe his howse and lykewyse sir Thomas Pope'.²⁰¹ There followed a proclamation which confirmed the council's commitment

¹⁹⁸ Jordan, *Chronicle and Political Papers of Edward VI*, p. 19.

¹⁹⁹ *CSP, Spanish*, x, 47.

²⁰⁰ Brigden, 'Scudamore's Letters to Hoby', p. 108.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, 114. Thomas Pope was one of the executors appointed by Wriothesley in his will made towards the end of July 1550, though he appears not to have proved it with the widow and Sir Edmund Peckham.

to the Act of Uniformity, providing for common prayer and the conduct of worship in the English tongue,²⁰² and from that moment any possibility of a return to the years of Henry's church had gone for ever, or so it appeared to contemporaries. On 31 January 1550 Van der Delft saw that there was nothing further that the conservatives could do: 'everything is going to ruin', and 'the good men in the king's service [the conservatives] are revealed as such, for they are all turned away and discountenanced, being under suspicion of not approving entirely of the new religion, and in the end not one will escape out of their hands [the reformers] if God does not provide for their safety'.²⁰³ On 2 February 1550 Wriothesley and Arundel were formally 'banished from the Counsell' and their names deleted from the list of councillors, and 'commaunded to keep their houses in London and not departye thence'.²⁰⁴ Warwick had no further use for the earl of Southampton, nor for the earls of Arundel and Shrewsbury, and Richard Southwell.²⁰⁵ They were abandoned, their careers ended in 1550 so far as Warwick was concerned, though Richard Southwell who had made himself a very rich man by the dissolution of the monasteries, lived and worked for the crown, standing well clear of political issues, into the reign of Elizabeth.

Meantime Wriothesley became dangerously ill according to Van der Delft, 'and it is supposed that he cannot last two days longer'.²⁰⁶ He was wrong about that because he reported a week later (17 March), that the earl of Southampton is better and regrets it, 'desiring as I am told to be under the earth rather than upon it'.²⁰⁷ Two months after his humiliation in March 1547, Wriothesley had attributed his misfortunes

²⁰² Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, i, pp. 485-6; 5 & 6 Edward VI, c.1.

²⁰³ *CSP, Spanish*, x, 21.

²⁰⁴ Wriothesley, ii, pp. 32-3.

²⁰⁵ Hoak, *The King's Council*, p. 59.

²⁰⁶ *CSP, Spanish*, x, 44.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 47.

to the enmity which Somerset had borne him 'for a long time past',²⁰⁸ while Somerset for his part believed that the failure of the king not to grant him the titles that he had expected was due to the influence that Wriothesley had over Henry.²⁰⁹ All those long-nurtured resentments surfaced in November and December 1549, and Wriothesley was the first loser.

The imperial ambassador wrote to the emperor on 12 April, that Somerset was again to assume the head of government jointly with Warwick and that their main objective would be to abolish totally 'the practise of the ancient religion, so hated and calumniated by the earl (of Warwick) and spurned by the Protector'.²¹⁰ In the event Somerset was merely reinstated to the council and made Lord Marshall of England,²¹¹ but soon after he and Warwick were reported as being in close communication and visiting each other every day.²¹² Perhaps the bitterest pill of all for Wriothesley was the marriage of Warwick's son to a daughter of Somerset celebrated with much grandeur and ceremonial in the presence of hundreds of guests on 3 June 1550.²¹³ It was a reconciliation between the Seymours and Dudleys more apparent than real. The former Lord Chancellor was finished and there is no evidence that he was in any way involved in the doomed attempts of Somerset in late June and early July to use Gardiner as a means to unseat Warwick.

Arundel and Southampton rarely appeared in the House of Lords after Warwick's successful *coup* in December 1549, and from 94 per cent attendance in the

²⁰⁸ CSP, Spanish, ix, 91-2; Hayward, *The Life and Raigne of King Edward the Sixth*, p. 36, where it is said that Wriothesley's loss of the chancellorship in March 1547 caused a 'wound of disgrace [which] never left bleeding, until it was stopped by the Protector's fall'.

²⁰⁹ CSP, Spanish, ix, 100-1.

²¹⁰ CSP, Spanish, x, 63.

²¹¹ Wriothesley, ii, p. 36. Somerset was released from the Tower on 6 February 1550.

²¹² CSP, Spanish, x, 72, 87.

²¹³ Ibid, 98, 108.

first year of Edward's reign, to 84 per cent in the second year, Wriothesley's attendances fell to fourteen in the third.²¹⁴ While many of his absences were no doubt due to the illness which had plagued him over the last nine months of his life, there is no doubt that bitter disappointment also played a part. Wriothesley's health had long been uncertain and unpredictable and was even more so from the date of his loss of membership of the privy council. At the end of June he was allowed to go to his Hampshire home because he was 'verie sicke and therefore hath neede of the ayre of the cuntrey', but within ten days was permitted to return to London where he remained.²¹⁵

In his *Chronicle* note for 31 July 1550 Edward wrote simply, 'the earl of Southampton died',²¹⁶ and Wriothesley's cousin recorded 'Memorandum: the 30 of July Sir Thomas Wrythesly, Lord Wrythesly, Earle of Southampton, and knight of the garter, and one of the executors of Kinge Henry the VIII, departed out of this transitorye lyfe at his place in Holborne... he had bene longe sicke...'.²¹⁷ The brevity of the entry in Edward's *Chronicle* and the bleak record of Charles Wriothesley perhaps encapsulates the near-irrelevance of the last six months of Wriothesley's life. In his letter of 31 July 1550 to Hoby, Scudamore wrote the most dismissive words of all regarding Wriothesley; 'yesternight God hath called to his mercye the Erle of Southampton, for the which I geave to God most high thanks'.²¹⁸ After Norfolk and Gardiner, perhaps the most influential conservative in England had ceased to be any threat to evangelical progress.

According to Bishop Ponet, not the most objective of commentators,

²¹⁴ Graves, *The House of Lords*, p. 224.

²¹⁵ APC, 1550-52, pp. 59, 64.

²¹⁶ Jordan, *Chronicle and Political Papers of Edward VI*, p. 42.

²¹⁷ Wriothesley, *Chronicle*, ii, p. 42.

²¹⁸ Brigden, 'Scudamore's Letters to Hoby', p. 143.

Wriothesley 'fearing lest he should come to some open shameful end... poisoned himself or pined away for thought'. Burnet said that he died from grief and vexation, and that is more likely to be the truth. He was buried in St. Andrew's Church, Holborn, following a service at which Bishop Hooper, not the most obvious choice, preached.²¹⁹ Given Warwick's (and Somerset's) religious views it is hardly surprising that they nominated a committed reformer to preach the funeral oration, although based upon this piece of evidence and the terms of his will, A. L. Rowse concludes that Wriothesley had changed his religious views with the passage of time 'to the Protestant position'.²²⁰ If he did, which this writer strongly disputes, that must have occurred within a matter of a few months prior to his death. Rowse seems either to have been ignorant of the clear historical evidence of Wriothesley's leadership of the conservatives, or has chosen to ignore his attempts to restore Henrician Catholicism, to disregard what contemporary observers thought at the time, or failed to notice that Wriothesley chose committed Catholics to be executors of his will. Wriothesley's remains were later re-interred in Titchfield Church some weeks after his death, and those of his wife laid to rest next to him many years after. They remain there to this day in an elaborate tomb erected long after his death.

It is difficult not to have some sympathy for Wriothesley; quite unashamedly he was used by Warwick for his own purposes, deceived, misled and finally rejected having served his purpose. Wriothesley died a convinced Catholic no doubt bitterly disappointed at the outcome of his efforts to restore the faith of his fathers, resentful of the deception that Warwick had cynically practised upon him, and more generally

²¹⁹ Wriothesley, ii, p. 41; H. Machyn, *Diary of Henry Machyn*, Camden Society, o.s. ed. J. G. Nicholls, (1848), pp. 1, 313; S. J. Gunn, 'The Structures of Politics in Early Tudor England', *TRHS*, (1997), p. 73, says that Wriothesley 'asked that John Hooper... preach his funeral sermon'. The evidence he offers is not conclusive.

²²⁰ Rowse, 'Thomas Wriothesley, First Earl of Southampton', p. 126.

overwhelmed by the failures of the last three years of his life. Despite his great experience, he proved to be no match for the more subtle and devious politicians around him. The fervour of his commitment to the Henrician settlement blinded him to the difficulties of governing a country which by the end of 1549 had travelled some way down the road to reformation. Its king was a youth old enough to know his own mind, and have strong evangelical preferences, but too young to exercise any effective control over a council divided by religious differences. As Mary was to find out a few years later, there was no prospect of the complete restoration of traditional Catholic worship even by bloody compulsion.

Conclusion

For six years between 1544 and 1550 Thomas Wriothesley was at the heart of the interaction of political and religious issues. He played a prominent role in the harassment of Anne Askew and George Blagge and had made a determined effort to link Queen Catherine Parr to the heretical views of the reformers. He saw, no doubt with dismay, the sudden abandonment of the persecution in late summer of 1546, the catastrophic loss of conservative colleagues with the execution of Surrey, the imprisonment of Norfolk, the side-lining of Stephen Gardiner, and the rise to power of the Hertford, Dudley and Paget triumvirate. While there was a majority of conservatives in the privy council, the two most influential in government had been removed from the political scene almost at the moment of Henry's death and the influence of the residue thereby dramatically reduced.

Wriothesley's personal faith can only be deduced from his actions and the (sometimes distorted) judgements of others. Whether he ever committed to paper his

innermost thoughts and feelings we may never know, but the absence of letters or other writings leave us to make our own assessment on limited evidence, though what there is all points in one direction. The political realities of late 1546 forced upon him the choice as to whether to attach himself to the rising stars Hertford and Dudley, or to remain in the isolation which would otherwise have been his lot. He chose the expedient course in the hope that with the coronation of Edward, he would retain his office as chancellor and all the financial benefits and political influence that this would provide. He had been appointed by Henry as one of his executors and appeared to have achieved his principal objective, but the disastrous misjudgement of early March 1547 cost him his office and exclusion from the privy council, a consequence which he might have foreseen had he been more realistic as to his status in the eyes of the reformers. His hopes of restraining the advance of the reformation was destroyed overnight, and his latent hostility to Somerset fuelled a continuing determination to bring about his destruction. So blinded was he by this ambition that he allowed himself to be persuaded by Warwick that there was the real prospect of a return to Henrician Catholicism in late 1549. But he was misled into thinking that Warwick had a serious intent to restore the old religion; other observers thought this no more than a manoeuvre to gather conservative support to remove Somerset, and so it proved when Warwick saw his life with Somerset's threatened by Wriothesley and Arundel. The restoration of Somerset to the council finally ended Wriothesley's political career and although he was not victimised and only restricted in his movements, there was no prospect of a return to the public stage, even if his deteriorating health had not prevented it.

A lifetime of experience in the whole range of work within the government of

Henry, working under two highly efficient managers, translating Henry's policies into effective action as his secretary and thereafter managing the council, did not fail to teach Wriothesley that subtlety and deviousness and a machiavellian approach were essential attributes in the world of Tudor politics. But as much as he needed those qualities he needed also to recognise them in others and sometimes this he failed to do. He had status as Lord Chancellor but not the influence, respect and regard of others which he needed if he was to become the leader of the government (or even of a credible party), and impose a policy on the council. He never gathered to himself sufficient councillors to carry any proposal, and in the balance against Somerset and later Warwick, he was of lighter weight; he carried no conviction nor inspired much affection, confidence or loyalty. Family connections between Somerset and the young king and their shared religious views, were enough to ensure Wriothesley's exclusion from any significant influence over the political or religious policies of the state in Edward's reign, and the political skills of Warwick were sufficient to maintain that exclusion. The bright promise at the moment of Henry's death on 29 January 1547 had completely disappeared three years later.

8. Conclusion

From historians of Tudor England, Wriothesley has not had a good press, and although most acknowledge his existence, few apparently see him as being of any great importance in the order of things during the reigns of Henry and Edward.¹ Froude, Pollard and Jordan all wrote him off in a few generally critical words.² Their views of him are less than just, and recently historians have been inclined to make more careful and considered judgements. This thesis has sought to provide a better balanced assessment of the man and his motives and of his long-lasting political importance.

It is readily conceded that during his career in the upper echelons of the government, Wriothesley did not make the impact that Wolsey and Cromwell had been able to do. Indeed he could not do so; Henry's experience of Wolsey and Cromwell was such that no one was allowed to exercise again such a totality of control over the affairs of the state as they. Consequently Wriothesley's career has been overshadowed and he had in truth only limited opportunities to make his mark in history between 1540 and 1547. Nonetheless he deserves better at the hands of historians. All in one way or another have created the impression of a fairly anonymous individual the highlights of whose career were the alleged attempt to bring down Catherine Parr, the torturing of Anne Askew and the attempt to re-establish Henrician Catholicism in Edward's reign in conjunction with

¹ Even so it is surprising that some historians have confused Thomas Wriothesley with his cousin Charles and indeed his son Henry. For example, J. Youings, *Sixteenth Century England* (London, 1984), pp. 114, 262, and R. W. Heinze, *The Proclamations of the Tudor Kings* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 29, 144, 189, 317.

² J. A. Froude, *History of England from the fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada* (London, 1870), vol. 4, p. 247; A. F. Pollard, *England under Protector Somerset* (London, 1900), pp. 23-4; W. K. Jordan, *Edward VI: the Young King, The Protectorship of the Duke of Somerset* (Cambridge, Mass, 1968), pp. 69-72.

John Dudley, earl of Warwick. Prior to the current study, the most detailed and best known account of Wriothesley's career is contained in a revisionist article by A. J. Slavin and some more detailed comments on that piece seem appropriate here.³

Slavin in his study on the fall of Thomas Wriothesley seeks to look more deeply into his character, religious and political motivation than other historians have done, and generally his conclusions are well supported by the evidence and his claim that Wriothesley 'had a nearly matchless experience and ability in royal service' does not overstate the case.⁴ While it is difficult to make absolute judgements it is arguable that William Paget and William Petre were more effective secretaries in the mid-Tudor period, and Slavin indeed concedes Paget's expertise. His article however, suffers from a number of factual errors. Slavin states that Edward Seymour had been overthrown and executed by Warwick with the aid of Wriothesley, whereas Somerset's execution took place on 22 January 1552, eighteen months after Wriothesley had died and two years after he had been rehabilitated by the privy council.⁵ Furthermore, a number (too many) of the references are inaccurate.⁶ Slavin's attempt to 'discover the outlines of a conspiracy which dulls the lustre of the "Good Duke" while serving to rehabilitate a maligned Henrician', namely Wriothesley, is unconvincing.⁷ His argument is seriously flawed by his attempt to

³ A. J. Slavin, 'The Fall of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley: A Study in the Politics of Conspiracy'. *Albion*, 7 1975, pp. 265-86.

⁴ Ibid, p. 270.

⁵ Ibid, p. 268.

⁶ For example, references nos. 16, 44, 48. The first two refer to *Henry VIII, The Mask of Royalty* by L. B. Smith where Slavin purports to quote what does not appear on the pages stated. The third reference concerns Gardiner's failure to agree to a land exchange with Henry, not what Slavin suggests. Slavin also writes that 'it was Wriothesley's opinion that the queen (Catherine Parr) was the most virtuous of Henry's wives, and quotes Smith's book *Henry VIII: The Mask of Royalty* at page 228 as his authority. Nothing on that page or elsewhere justifies such a comment unless a 'companion for his elderly tastes' can be so interpreted.

⁷ Slavin, 'The Fall of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley', p. 285.

demonstrate the existence of a new and hitherto unknown conspiracy, whereas it has always been undoubted that Wriothesley's hostility to the political revolution devised by Seymour, Warwick and Paget which took place immediately after Henry's death, was the prime cause of his being purged, notwithstanding the justifications used at the time.

Slavin's thesis is that the clue to the 1547 disgrace can be seen in the eyewitness account of the 1549 coup. Despite Slavin's criticism of Professor Malkiewicz it is clear that the root cause of all Wriothesley's troubles in 1547 and 1549 was his hostility to the abandonment of the provisions of Henry's will, the creation of a protectorate which was at odds with the terms of that will, the inevitable reduction in his own influence in the privy council and the probability that the country would be steered firmly towards a reformist religion with all the implications that this would have for the conservative old guard.⁸

But Slavin is pushing at an open door. There really is no doubt that the assembling of a mass of judicial disapproval to facilitate Wriothesley's removal from office in March 1547 was a device based upon a technicality without any element of legality behind it. For three or four years before Henry's death Wriothesley had done all he could to root out the heretical opinions current within the court itself, and had failed, and his control of the Great Seal was an obstacle to the plans of the conspirators Seymour, Dudley and Paget which made his removal necessary. So the engagement of the whole weight of judicial opinion against the Lord Chancellor helped to achieve their purposes and pacified complaint as to the manner of its achievement.⁹

Slavin seeks to re-establish for Wriothesley a reputation which historians have

⁸ Ibid, p. 285. Referring to the edited report of A. J. A. Malkiewicz, 'An Eyewitness's Account of the *coup d'état* of October 1549', *EHR*, lxx (1955), pp. 600-609.

⁹ *APC*, 1547-50, pp. 48-57.

described as tarnished, and claims that modern historians have been chiefly influenced against him by two writers, Richard Moryson and Bishop John Ponet.¹⁰ But there are more contemporary criticisms of Wriothesley than those two. The thankful expression of Scudamore on hearing of Wriothesley's death, can only be interpreted as welcoming a blessed release.¹¹ George Blagge had no reason to be friendly to Wriothesley and expressed himself in vigorously hostile terms about him.¹² The history of the quick trial and condemnation of Blagge suggests considerable anxiety on the part of Wriothesley to settle with him; Blagge was saved, no thanks to Wriothesley, by the timely intervention of John Russell, among others. Slavin is also in error in describing Wriothesley as Henry's 'pig'; that description refers to George Blagge, as an examination of Foxe shows clearly.¹³ Slavin's misreading of the reference is important because he seeks to argue that the nickname showed that Wriothesley was a close and trusted confidant of Henry.¹⁴ Slavin also relies upon the extravagant rejection of the pope by Wriothesley on his appointment to the office of Lord Chancellor in 1544. But what other course could be expected of one who in order to be acceptable as the king's first judicial officer, had to demonstrate his clear rejection of the pope's authority and his unqualified acceptance of the royal supremacy? Furthermore Slavin quotes Wriothesley's warning that 'every man who sold

¹⁰ Slavin, 'The Fall of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley', p. 268.

¹¹ S. Brigden, 'The Letters of Richard Scudamore to Sir Philip Hoby, September 1549-March 1555', *Camden Miscellany* XXX, Camden Society 39 (1990), p. 143.

¹² Blagge wrote of Wriothesley, 'By false deceit, by craft and subtle ways', cruelty had 'crept full high, borne up by sundry stays' G. F. Nott, *The Works of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder*, 2 vols. (London, 1815), i, p. xcvi.

¹³ Foxe, v. 618.

¹⁴ Slavin, 'The Fall of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley', p. 269. It is possible that Slavin may have misread Foxe's narrative in his *Acts and Monuments*. A hasty reading of this might suggest that the words, 'Ah, my pig', refer to Wriothesley rather than George Blagge, and J. J. Scarisbrick makes the same error in *Henry VIII* (London, 1968), at page 17. As Scarisbrick's book was published in 1968 and Slavin's article published in 1973, it is possible that Slavin's error originated with Scarisbrick. My interpretation is

justice sold the king's majesty', as indicating that he commanded the respect of those who appeared in the Chancery courts and promoted a higher moral standard than was current in his time. But such a comment could just as easily have been made by any judge of the day and does not advance Slavin's case.¹⁵

Nor does the evidence support Slavin's claim that Wriothesley was 'neither a "Catholyke" in religion nor a vindictive intriguer'. His actions against the reformers at court, against the queen herself, and specifically his behaviour to Edward Crome, George Blagge, and Anne Askew argue that he was both. His aim and that of Rich was the destruction of Catherine Parr and the rest of the heretics whom he saw, or he suspected were about the court and more specifically about the person of the king and queen. Neither does Wriothesley's alleged 'involvement' with Thomas Seymour advance Slavin's thesis. Wriothesley was wise enough to recognise that he could only be the cause of trouble given his bitter resentment of his brother Edward (Somerset), and his dangerous ambition to control the young king and marry Elizabeth. Thomas Seymour was wholly irresponsible in word and deed and for anyone who came too close to him the association was potentially disastrous. It does require some very convoluted reasoning by Slavin to believe that the interrogatories administered to Thomas Seymour were only designed to obtain evidence against Wriothesley himself.¹⁶ Indeed the state papers show us that Wriothesley and Rich between them undertook the detailed investigations into Seymour's misconduct, and the invitation from Somerset to Wriothesley in June 1549 to accept an ambassadorial post to France may argue for his gratitude for Wriothesley's role in

confirmed by L. B. Smith in *Henry VIII, The Mask of Royalty* (London, 1971) p. 242.

¹⁵ Slavin, 'The Fall of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley', p. 271, quoting BL, *Sloan MS*, 1523, fo. 30a and b.

¹⁶ Slavin, 'The Fall of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley', p. 272.

resolving the Thomas Seymour problem though it is equally possible that Somerset wished to separate Wriothesley from the court.¹⁷

Slavin's argument implies that Foxe was so prejudiced against Wriothesley and the other religious conservatives, that his record of the treatment of Protestant martyrs and his denunciation of the conservatives should be rejected as unreliable. Latterly Foxe's factual credibility and objectivity has received strong support, and it has to be said that Slavin's rejection of Foxe's criticism of Wriothesley is not in accord with current academic opinion.¹⁸ Wriothesley's acquisition over the years by grant or by purchase of much former monastic land does not make him a reformer any more than it does the many other Catholics, including the duke of Norfolk, who benefited greatly from the monastic dissolution.¹⁹ Indeed proportionately, conservatives secured more of the available monastic land than did evangelicals. We also have to remember how much hostility there was from the conservatives in Mary's reign to any suggestion that they relinquish land acquired through the monastic dissolution. Similarly Wriothesley's energetic suppression of the 1549 uprisings in Hampshire demonstrates his concern to preserve peace in his own county, to avoid tumult and upheaval, and to prove as a justice of the peace exercising the office conferred upon him by the king and carrying out the duties expected of him, his

¹⁷ D. M. Loades, *John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, 1505-1553* (Oxford, 1996), p. 123; Jordan, *Edward VI: The Young King*, p. 382; HMC, *Bath MS*, iv, Seymour Papers, p. 110, 'You shall never have cause to repent of your goodness towards me', wrote Wriothesley to Seymour.

¹⁸ Slavin, 'The Fall of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley', pp. 273-4. The article by T. S. Freeman, 'Research, Rumour and Propaganda: Anne Boleyn in "Foxe's Book of Martyrs"', *HJ* (1995), pp. 797-819, makes the general point that Foxe should not be discounted as an historical source of accurate information on the Tudor period. See p. 153, above.

¹⁹ P. A. Cunich, 'The administration and alienation of ex-monastic lands by the crown 1536-47', unpublished Cambridge Ph. D. Thesis 1990, analyses the disposition of monastic lands among the nobility, gentry, royal servants and others, pp. 176-98.

loyalty to the king and the Protector at a time when the country was in a turmoil.²⁰ It does not thereby categorise him as of the reformed faith. The suggestion that Wriothesley was 'neither vindictive nor secretive and... fell before the wiles of truly subtle and factious men' is a little short of reality.²¹ Sheer political necessity forced Wriothesley to adapt himself to what he could not control. For a short period in late 1549 Wriothesley thought that Warwick was the one man in the country whose authority and power were great enough to secure an early reversion to Henrician Catholicism and intended to use Wriothesley's support to do so. In that Wriothesley was wholly wrong; either he was misled or he deceived himself, and the confirmation of the Act of Uniformity was enough to signal the end of any hopes for a Henrician reversion.

Having said much in criticism of Slavin's article about the fall of Thomas Wriothesley it would be right to comment briefly upon his other article which deals with the reform of the court of Augmentations, in which Slavin makes a good case for the argument that Wriothesley with his wide experience of all the revenue problems of Henry's reign saw that only a wide-ranging overhaul of crown finance, which was in a precarious state in 1545, could help to stop the slide towards insolvency. With Paget, as we have seen, Wriothesley formed an ex-officio team charged with placing the royal finances upon a more secure footing and reviewing the complexities of raising and collecting money. Slavin shows that Wriothesley's plans for the reform of Augmentations were soundly based despite his deep anxiety of, and hostility to any proposals which might operate to the detriment of the court of Chancery, and impact detrimentally upon the fee

²⁰ Jordan, *Edward VI: The Young King*, pp. 356, 449.

²¹ Slavin, 'The Fall of Lord Chancellor Wriothesley', p. 272.

structure of the court.²²

An earlier article on Wriothesley by A. L. Rowse has very little to say about his years as an associate of Cromwell, virtually ignores the period as Henry's secretary and is largely devoted to an examination of the Wriothesley domestic scene and more especially of his land acquisitions. He shows his repugnance at the Lord Chancellor's behaviour towards Anne Askew with the 'odious man' Rich, but does not put his criticism into any context relative to the religious issues of the time, except to conclude, wrongly, that Wriothesley ultimately died a Protestant, a conclusion based apparently upon the terms of his will and the fact that the reformist Bishop Hooper preached at his funeral.²³ He had changed, says Rowse, 'with the movement of his time, over to the Protestant position. Therein, in part, lies his historic interest for us'. There is a great deal more to Thomas Wriothesley than that. Rowse does not pursue this 'interest' and makes no attempt to reconcile Wriothesley's determined efforts to root out heresy with what he says were Wriothesley's religious convictions at the end of his life. He tries to explain the disasters of 1547 and 1549 by reference to a 'long story of hostility' between Somerset and Wriothesley, precipitated by the introduction of the new Prayer Book (of 1549), while at the same time conceding that Wriothesley 'lost his constancy, gave way, and agreed to everything'.²⁴ Much of that part of his article is at odds with the facts, and there is little in it that is not accessible elsewhere. It provides only minimal illumination of a character who played a significant part in the history of England between 1540 and 1550.

²² A. J. Slavin, 'Lord Chancellor Wriothesley and Reform of Augmentations: New Light on an Old Court', in idem (ed.), *Tudor Men and Institutions* (Baton Rouge, 1972), pp. 49-69.

²³ A. L. Rowse, 'Thomas Wriothesley, First Earl of Southampton', *HLQ*, 28, 2 (1965), p. 126.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 124.

So we come to the heart of the matter. What can we conclude about Thomas Wriothesley? Where do we place him in the hierarchy of royal servants in the mid-Tudor period? What did he represent? How significant was the role that he played in the religious and political factions at the end of Henry's reign and into Edward's? Is it possible to detect a thread of consistency throughout his career?

We have seen that from his birth into a gentry family with the entrée into official circles through his father's appointment, he entered the service of Wolsey, became a companion and clerk to Gardiner, and then to Cromwell, and the latter's confidential secretary, his spokesman and correspondent. His early education and the time spent at the university may well have led him initially towards a less rigid view of the Catholic faith and he may even have toyed with reformist ideas in the humanist environment at Cambridge. There are a few letters extant which suggest that he may once have had humanist inclinations, even if he had no sympathy with the religious reformers. Wriothesley's very considerable talent for effective organisation brought him to the notice of Henry whose penchant for personable and competent young men was well known.²⁵ The gradual progression from 'junior clerk' to king's secretary was a long apprenticeship of sixteen years, adequate time for Henry to make a considered judgement as to Wriothesley's qualities. His presence, personality and his familiarity with the French and German languages, his understanding of the government's foreign policies as they developed with

²⁵ Henry's 'minions', temporarily dispersed by Wolsey, characterised those qualities. A painting of Wriothesley (a copy of a lost original dated c. 1544), hangs in Palace House, Beaulieu, the home of Lord Montagu and is reproduced in this thesis with his consent. There is also a chalk drawing by Hans Holbein in the Musée Nationaux, Paris, which well illustrates the characteristics of the man. See also Rowse, 'Thomas Wriothesley, First Earl of Southampton', p. 120, and R. W. Goulding, *Wriothesley Portraits*, Walpole Society, VIII (Oxford 1920), pp. 17-94.

the changing needs of the times, made him eminently suitable for employment as an ambassador, though in the event his involvement in that field was limited and not particularly successful. As Cromwell's 'managing clerk' he could hardly have been unaware of the changes in religion which were happening under his patron's direction, and it is reasonable to assume that he did not actively oppose those ideas. Nor is it sensible to imagine that he could do so and still remain in Cromwell's employment, anymore than he could avoid involvement in the trial and execution of Surrey, the hounding of Norfolk and later the destruction of Thomas Seymour, in all of which events he took a leading role. While satisfying the demands of his employer, he carried out the obligations of office which he would otherwise have forfeited. There were few in authority who would stand against the king, and Thomas Wriothesley was not one of them. Only after July 1540 had he expressed his hostility to Cromwell's reformist plans, and then no doubt because the whole political climate had altered and he had to accommodate to that situation or lose his office and possibly his head. Such an 'accommodation' he also made in late 1546, in early 1547, and again in 1548, in each case to meet the demands created by changing circumstances.

There is no indication that Wriothesley ever doubted the king's supremacy as is clear from his express rejection of the pope's authority over the church in England. Whether it represented Wriothesley's deep-felt views or was simply the conventional way of indicating his unqualified support for the king's authority is impossible to say, but there are no suggestions that he was not happy with the Henrician solution. That was a common enough situation; Stephen Gardiner never had any difficulty in accepting the

supremacy, notwithstanding his change of view under Mary. With Mary whose senior he was by only four years, Wriothesley had formed a good relationship and her goodwill and his own actions proclaim him a Henrician Catholic.

From the time of his appointment as secretary, Wriothesley was recognised by Chapuys, Van der Delft and de Selve as an influential figure in English political life, a person whose support had to be secured with gifts, and their opinions did not change over time. During his years as Henry's secretary Wriothesley's assistance was regularly canvassed by high and low alike, because he had the ear of the king, as he had of Thomas Cromwell in the 1530s. He truly was a 'friend at court' if his interest could be engaged. Even in the early days of 1547 he appeared to commentators to have much influence in the council.

Wriothesley's years as Henry's secretary put him in line for the premier office of Lord Chancellor despite his limited judicial experience. His selection had little to do with legal expertise. The early and deliberate side-stepping of responsibility for some of the judicial work of his court was a reflection of his concern to look after Henry's affairs in other fields, though his organisational talents were employed in making a number of improvements to the procedural functions of his court. There is no evidence that he ever acted as an advocate, and his membership of the Inns of Court did not imply a legal career and was probably merely a recognition of his status. Nor is there any suggestion that he was ever charged with corrupt or partial behaviour in his judicial work despite his own admission that he was tempted; in that respect he may have set a higher standard than other contemporary judges. In the world's eyes the biggest blot on his reputation was the

torturing on the rack, of a woman whose testimony against the queen and court

Wriothesley so desperately needed to facilitate the attack on the heretics within the court and so ruin the queen and her ladies (and by association their husbands).

Wriothesley's skill in managing the king's finances is undoubted, and as treasurer of the wars, as a member of several commissions appointed to secure the funds needed to finance Henry's military ambitions, he was generally considered with William Petre and Walter Mildmay, those other financial wizards, to have a thorough grasp of the means of raising money, and the need properly to control and account for all expenditure. In the last few years of Henry's reign England in reality was on the edge of bankruptcy, and the mood of despair which emanates from some of Wriothesley's letters testifies to the anxiety which it caused him and explains the closeness of the watch that he kept over financial matters. His part in the reordering of the country's monetary affairs represents his most enduring and effective work for the state.

Thomas Wriothesley was an enthusiastic gatherer of the lands which flowed on to the property markets or were in the gift of the king with the dissolution of monasteries and chantries. He was not slow to take advantage of his position at the centre of power to put in his claim for those choice morsels that became available. His acquisitions were large, and although he had to pay for a good many of them, there is evidence that the price was not infrequently less than the market value, a criticism that would apply equally to others. Complaint of his behaviour in this field may only be sour grapes; everyone who could do so, took full advantage of the hundreds of vacated monastic establishments available for disposal, and Wriothesley was not different in kind from the rest, whether in seeking for

substantial estates and large abandoned religious buildings, or small plots, manors and farms.²⁶

Wriothesley's family life, judged by the relatively few clues that can be distilled from documents and the opinions of others, seems to have been fruitful and contented. Lady Jane his wife, who survived him by many years, produced eight children, including three boys two of whom died in infancy.²⁷ Some of his children were very young when their father died, leaving the widow with some problems, though not one would imagine, financial ones. The will by which he disposed of his estate, a substantial proportion of which went inevitably to the surviving son Henry, was designed with some care to make provision for every member of the family, in leaving bequests to many friends and dependents, demonstrating a generous concern for their welfare.²⁸ Perhaps the memorial placed in Titchfield church was no more than would be expected for an earl but we are entitled to assume that it also implied a great degree of affection for a loved husband and affectionate parent who died before any of his children were eighteen years old.²⁹ There can be no doubt, despite the views of Rowse, that Thomas Wriothesley was a Catholic at heart and lived and died in that faith, and his son Henry most certainly followed, and much more publicly and dangerously, in the same tradition. Henry, the second earl, married in February 1566, Mary daughter of the Surrey and Sussex landowner Anthony Browne, viscount Montagu, of another strongly Catholic family.³⁰ Henry's godmother, the Princess

²⁶ Wriothesley's acquisitions are fully discussed in Appendix I.

²⁷ See a portrait of her in Goulding, *Wriothesley Portraits*, Walpole Society, viii, (London, 1920)

²⁸ See Appendix 3 pp. 311-14 for a review of the provisions of the Will of Thomas Wriothesley.

²⁹ The monument was erected several years after Thomas Wriothesley died which may account for the surprising error in the inscription which records his death in 1551, though the preponderance of all contemporary evidence is that he died in July 1550.

³⁰ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, 198. Henry, the second earl of Southampton, was ill-advised enough to

Mary, was as rigid and committed a Catholic as any in the country, one who was only waiting for the death of a sickly brother to restore the Catholic faith in all its glory, restore the pope to his rightful place as head of the church in England and extirpate the heretics.

Wriothesley's sudden active involvement in religious faction in 1546 needs to be accounted for. Wisely as was to be expected of one brought up in the law, Thomas Wriothesley kept his own counsel about his religious convictions until the last few years of his life, and was only then driven into action in 1546 by his concern over the direction of religion in the last months of Henry's reign, his dislike of Somerset, and hostility towards his plans for religious reform. His earlier cautious avoidance of overt religious commitment was common to many of his contemporaries, a wise precaution at a time when mere suspicion came close to being adequate for a conviction before a court, but it is unrealistic to imagine that by mid 1546 he was not as much involved in the factional struggles as any other member of the council.

Up to that point very little seems to have gone ill with Wriothesley's life, though as we have seen he allowed himself to be dragged into two or three false moves. Status and considerable wealth had come his way, and the only real problem with which he had constantly to contend was a disposition to sudden attacks of ill health. He had avoided anything too contentious, or at least anything which would put him, his family and his affairs at risk. But everything suddenly seemed to go wrong at the end of 1546. The reformers had not been ousted late in the year as had once seemed possible, and indeed they rapidly grew in influence with their control over access to the king's presence. The

become involved with Norfolk's schemes to marry Mary, queen of Scots, and suffered three years imprisonment as a result.

embarrassing failure of Wriothesley's attempt to link Anne Askew's heresy to Catherine Parr and the ladies of her court, had made clear the possibility of a reformist take-over when Henry died. Everyone knew the names of Edward's tutors and what regime had been established for his education and there could hardly have been any doubt, given Edward's upbringing and Henry's tacit acceptance of that regime, that things were going to be different. Wriothesley had drafted Henry's will in such a way that he with the other executors would all share in carrying out Henry's wishes for the conduct of the realm during the minority of Edward. Without warning, under the influence of Somerset, Warwick and Paget, the will was discarded, overthrown, and the whole carefully balanced system of control was abandoned. The lawyer in Wriothesley would have been affronted by that, and his religious commitment, now inevitably forced into the open, found unacceptable the transparent changes made to ensure an evangelical government at odds with the dead king's intentions. He saw the important role in Edward's government properly due to him as Lord Chancellor, threatened by the Protector's plans. While he was constant in his religious beliefs after Cromwell's fall, (who could have doubted his commitment after the events of the summer of 1546?), Wriothesley's conduct had a touch of desperation about it; the Blagge affair, the racking of Askew and the attack on the queen showed him up as being almost naïve, as did the innocency which led to the unauthorised appointment of deputies in early 1547.

The orthodox religious view was not in a minority in the council at the time, but Wriothesley's misjudgement of the situation by his over-confidence, led directly to his loss by the Protector's dubious tactics of the very office that would have given him some

significant authority and voice in the privy council. Having assisted in the creation of the Protectorate, Wriothesley had served his purpose and could be discarded. To be later restored to the council after two years was small consolation from being the first member of the judiciary and second to the Protector. His resentment against Somerset quietly simmered over the ensuing two and a half years, and like other members of the council except those to whom loyalty was important, was reflected in a developing association through 1549 with Warwick, Somerset's close and long-standing colleague. That association had as its objective the replacement of Somerset by Warwick. For reasons which are now incapable of being determined with certainty, Wriothesley had persuaded himself, or perhaps was led to believe, that Warwick was about to re-introduce Henrician Catholicism in England. There was ample contemporary evidence that such a proposal would have substantial support within the country. Had there not been a serious rebellion in the west, and violent disturbances in many other parts of the country resulting from opposition to the introduction of the new Prayer Book on Whitsunday 1549? Did not even Stephen Gardiner imagine in November 1549 that Warwick was about to turn back the clock? Restoration of the old Catholic liturgy did not necessarily imply restoration of the monasteries or chantries, or the return of their lands and wealth, as later became apparent to Mary. But the return to a church with the king as the head, and all other things as they were in mid-1546, was not an impossible dream. The only way of securing this was for Wriothesley to support Warwick in his plans in the expectation of securing the enhanced status within the government which success would surely have brought with it. Everything Wriothesley did in mid 1549 suggests however that he was out of his depth

when dealing with Somerset and Warwick.

Wriothesley, who had up to 1544 done what he had been told to do, avoiding involvement in dangerous factional games, found himself in November 1549 wholly unequipped to compete with the politicians who had been practising their deviousness for much longer. He misread their protestations, and accepted their implied undertakings at face value. For a man who had been at the heart of government since the mid 1530s at the very latest, there was an air of naiveté, even of ingenuousness about his behaviour. In truth when it came to issues of religion and its political ramifications his judgement seems generally to have deserted him. Wriothesley's career as an administrator did not equip him adequately for the political role which he was called on to fill as Lord Chancellor. Under Henry this created few problems as scope for independent action was minimal, but the Protectorate put schemers in control of the government and Wriothesley found himself surrounded by devious self-seeking politicians whose involvement in the factional infighting of 1544 onwards had endued them with a talent which Wriothesley did not possess.

It should not be thought however that Wriothesley was temperamentally incapable of plotting or duplicity. Some contemporary opinion implies that Wriothesley was untrustworthy, devious and machiavellian, and there is the corroborative evidence which indicates that he probably betrayed his mentor Cromwell (and perhaps also Thomas Wyatt). His failed attempt to bring about the destruction of Somerset and Warwick in late 1549, suggests that he had little regard for loyalty even by the standards of his day.

One of the greatest problems for any historian is to seek to fathom the real heart-

felt aspirations and beliefs of their subjects. Many hundreds of letters written by or to Wriothesley survive in the state papers, but there appear to be none to any member of his family and only rarely in official letters does he allow his feelings to break through the formal content. In some of his letters to Paget in the last two years of Henry's reign we can find signs of irritation and frustration, but even there little is written at a personal level. The *Wriothesley Papers* (SP.7) all of which are addressed to him, many from friends, his servants and agents, or from mere acquaintances, are often informal and informative and mention his properties, report on plans for new developments or are requests for the exercise of influence in the writer's favour, but they tell us little of Wriothesley the man. We do not have the benefit of his replies, and we are left with the terms of only one formal document, the will, on which to rely for any 'feel' as to the character and temperament of this secretive and private person.

Wriothesley had a penetrating mind and a complete grasp of governmental and financial systems, and as a 'civil servant' he bears comparison with other secretaries of his period, though perhaps he was not the equal of Cromwell, Paget or Cecil. An examination of his many extant holograph letters indicates a good command of language, allied with clarity and precision in presentation, and if that be an indication of the depth of his learning, then he was a well-educated man by comparison with his contemporaries.

Not the least of his valuable services to his country was his crucial work in the reorganisation of the finances of the state, and one wonders what might have happened without Wriothesley's achievements in the financial field. His success as a diplomat was modest, but he was seen both by the imperial and French ambassadors as a man of

authority and influence in Henry's court and it was expected that he would fill an important role under Edward. Events outside his control including the loss of the other leading conservatives, the Howards and Stephen Gardiner, and his own errors of judgement contributed to bringing his political career to a premature end.

Despite all the disappointments, Thomas Wriothesley can lay claim to a place among the most influential political figures of the Tudor period. He was one of the first of the new style civil servants selected from the ranks of the gentry, as were Paget, Petre and Cecil, promoted for their administrative competence, reliability and sound judgement. We can conclude with some justification, that in his public life he was a dependable and trustworthy servant of the crown, an admirable civil servant but a poor politician. Nonetheless his role and importance in the management of the affairs of state during the last fifteen years of Henry's reign entitles him to a better and more detailed assessment than has he has hitherto enjoyed and it is hoped that this review of his career in some measure provides it.

There is an element of speculation in all this, and we are left with speculation when it comes to writing the epitaph. Wriothesley gave some grounds for thinking that he was as concerned with his own security and financial and property affairs as with the concerns of anyone else. While he managed for most of his political career to keep on the side of the angels, his innate devotion to his Catholic faith forced the confrontation in early 1547 and led him into the disastrous and ill-fated plans of November 1549, which presaged his death six months later. His career failed in the end to match the promise of May 1544.

John Wilmot, second earl of Rochester, born in 1647, wrote in his 'Satyr Against

Reason and Mankind',³¹

'Birds feed on birds, beasts on each other prey, But savage man alone does man betray.
Look to the bottom of his vast design, Wherein man's wisdom, power and glory join:
The good he acts, the ill he does endure, 'Tis all from fear, to make himself secure'.

By the yardstick of these words we see the view, cynical perhaps but containing more than the germ of truth which cynicism so often contains, of one politician about others. It fairly summarises the motive force behind the political career of Thomas Wriothesley.

³¹ J. Wilmot, *The Complete Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. D. M. Vieth, (New Haven and London, 1968) p. 99.



Appendix 1

The Rewards of Service

Loyal servants in the mid Tudor period were often generously rewarded for their labours and many received, as they expected to, substantial grants of land and other benefits from an appreciative sovereign.¹ Similarly any office holder could himself expect to receive requests for favours as much as he expected to receive gifts or promises of favours which were commensurate with his status in the governmental system. Likewise he would reward his own servants, those who had an affinity with him, for the principle of patronage ran both up and down, while the legal system operated upon a process which included the expectation of reward.

The evidence shows that Wriothesley was a rapacious gatherer of lands which became available as a consequence of the monastic dissolution apart from being the recipient of much generosity from Henry. As confidential secretary to Cromwell he was in a strong position to influence the flow of patronage.

The ground-breaking research of Cunich has exposed much more clearly than has hitherto been apparent, the extent of land disposals by the court of Augmentations in the ten years after the start of the monastic dissolution.² The Wriothesley family like the Pagets and Petres are obvious examples of those non-noble families who benefited much from the dissolution and Cunich has shown that of all those whose names are identified by his research, limited as it was, the two who benefited most from the disposal of monastic land were Thomas Wriothesley and Richard Rich, who was sworn

¹ F. Heal and C. Holmes, *Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700*, (Basingstoke 1994), pp. 325-7, single out the Russells and Wriothesleys as the most notable of those whose political influence enabled them to carve out great territories in the south-west and Hampshire from the monastic estates.

² P. A. Cunich, 'The administration and alienation of ex-monastic lands by the crown, 1536-1547', unpublished Cambridge Ph.D. thesis 1990.

in as the first chancellor of the court of Augmentations in April 1536 and held the office until 1544. Wriothesley became the second largest land owner in Hampshire, a considerable achievement in a relatively short life. Indeed it was access to the business of the court of Augmentations and its officers which made such a considerable difference to the opportunities for acquiring properties. Cunich's researches show that of the value of lands alienated to individual grantees, gentry families received a little over twenty per cent, London based purchasers about eighteen per cent, and sixty per cent went to peers and members of the royal household or those holding government offices. Seven men received fifteen per cent between them but the only one of these who was a peer in 1536 was the duke of Suffolk.

The Wriothesley Papers archived at the Hampshire Record Office give considerable information not only about the land acquisitions of Thomas Wriothesley but also the disposals during his lifetime and those of his son and heir, Henry, many years later.³ The first recorded benefit that Wriothesley received so far as the records show, was in August 1530 with the grant in reversion of the office of bailiff of Warwick and nearby Snitterfield, not a particularly valuable gift, but at least a beginning.⁴ In January 1531 he was granted a pension by Henry of £5 a year from the lands of St. Mary's Abbey at York.⁵ These first tangible marks of favour were in due course followed by much more valuable gifts and offices. He was appointed coroner and attorney in the King's Bench in reversion on the 4 January 1536,⁶ and with lord Sandys, jointly made constable of Donnington Castle in Berkshire, and steward and bailiff of the manor and keeper of the woods in July 1536. While clerk of the signet in

³ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, 5M53.

⁴ *LP*, iv, (3), 6600 (11).

⁵ *LP*, v, 80 (25).

⁶ *LP*, x, 226 (2).

the same year he was required to provide twelve men for service in the north against the rebels of the Pilgrimage of Grace, a signal mark of Henry's confidence at a time of great national peril.

Wriothesley had a fairly close connection with successive bishops of Bath and Wells. In February 1537 the bishop granted to Cromwell and Wriothesley jointly the patronage of the parish of Dulcote upon the next vacancy, but for one turn only, and in the autumn of the same year to Wriothesley and William Paget he gave the next presentation to the prebend of Litton.⁷ In September 1545, by which time Wriothesley was Lord Chancellor, the same bishop granted him an annuity of £20 for life, and twelve months later Whitchurch Vicarage.⁸ It is unfortunate that the cathedral manuscripts are so cryptic on these entries.⁹ A wealthy Hampshire manor at Dogmersfield was 'confiscated' from the bishop of Bath and Wells in the autumn of 1539, passed to the court of Augmentations, and by July 1547 was in the possession of Wriothesley.¹⁰ It was the only property owned by the bishop in Hampshire.

Wriothesley obtained from his friend John Salcot, the abbot of Hyde and bishop of Bangor, an exceptionally long 61 year lease of the parsonage of Micheldever with its substantial tithes, and the monastery of St. Peter of Hyde, thereby avoiding the liability for fines which would be payable on a renewal of a lease of more normal length, though there is evidence to suggest that he also obtained a reversion of 99

⁷ HMC, *Wells*, ii, 247, 248. P. M. Hembry, *The Bishops of Bath and Wells, 1540-1640: Social and Economic Problems* (London, 1967), p. 63.

⁸ HMC, *Wells*, ii, 255-9, 260-2. See also Hembry, *The Bishops of Bath and Wells*. Bishops Clerk and Knight made a number of gifts to Wriothesley, some probably under pressure.

⁹ HMC, *Bath Longleat MSS* vol IV, Seymour Papers 1532-1686, ed. M. Blatcher, (London, 1968), pp. 226, 232.

¹⁰ *LP*, xiv, 714; W. G. Hoskins, *The Age of Plunder, The England of Henry VIII, 1500-1547* (London, 1976), p. 141. Hembry, *The Bishops of Bath and Wells*, pp. 14, 27, 68-9.

years after that.¹¹ At the end of 1536 Wriothesley built a home and made a garden at Micheldever from where his servant, Clerk, wrote to Wriothesley: 'my young master, [not the heir Henry], your son, your daughter and all your household are in good health'. With the intention of extending his holdings in November 1544 there was a grant to Wriothesley and his wife of the manor of Micheldever with an additional 66 acres of land for which he paid the very large sum of £1318.¹² In addition the abbey gave Wriothesley a lease for 40 years of East Stratton manor, and the tithes of East and West Stratton.

Wriothesley added to his offices in May 1536, with the appointment as 'graver of the irons appertaining to the coinage' at a yearly fee of £20 to be paid for life by the sheriff of York out of the profits of his bailiwick with a further fee to pay his deputy.¹³ Increasing influence enabled him to secure large grants of monastic land including Quarr Abbey in the Isle of Wight, near his family home. In June 1536 Husee reported to Lord Lisle who had property interests in Hampshire, and hoped for more, that he had 'delivered a bill yesterday with names of Quarre and Netley, both to Mr. Russell and Mr. Heneage, desiring them to motion the King therein'. Their solicitations were not as effective as were those of Wriothesley so centrally placed at court.¹⁴ Much of the stonework of the church of Quarr Abbey was used to build two blockhouses at East and West Cowes to guard the approaches to Southampton along Southampton

¹¹ *LP*, xii, (1), 593. *HRO*, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol 3, pp. 143, 178. Wriothesley had long been a close friend of Salcot and had tried to secure for him a bishopric in the late 1520s. Cromwell ultimately obtained the bishopric for him (*LP*, xiii, (2), 636), while Chapuys thought him of Boleyn's party. (*LP*, vi, 1067, 1460).

¹² *LP*, xix, (2), 690, (19).

¹³ *LP*, x, 226 (2), 870; xi, 202 (43), 232. *HRO*, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 141. A privy seal warrant of 21 February 1537 also granted him a further sum of £20 a year for the wages of his deputy.

¹⁴ M. St. Clare Byrne, *The Lisle Letters* (London and Chicago, 1981), vol. 3, no. 726.

Water as a protection primarily against French raids by sea.¹⁵ In December 1537, Titchfield Abbey was secured by Wriothesley who proceeded to demolish much of it and use the site and materials resulting to build his family seat, Titchfield Place, the Wriothesleys home for the next four generations.¹⁶ Not long after however, Jane Wriothesley had to remove from Titchfield to Micheldever as there was sickness in the village of Titchfield with the 'dead at her door'.

The abbey was very much in debt owing the king 200 marks for first fruits, and much of the structure was in a ruinous condition, leaving little realistic alternative but to demolish some of the buildings. At the beginning of 1538 Wriothesley's staff moved the whole of his household from Micheldever to the new home at Titchfield following completion of the reconstructed property. There also went with the Titchfield grant, fifteen manors in Hampshire, the rectories, churches, and all the possessions of Titchfield Abbey and other lands nearby which had an annual value of £25. 6. 8..

In July 1538 Wriothesley secured the site of Beaulieu Abbey after a dispute about it with Lisle who had hoped to obtain it for himself.¹⁷ Husee had kept Lisle informed as to progress of the matter and told him that he had enquired about the property; 'As concerning Beaulieu, it is suppressed, and the most part of the lands are still in the king's hands; but the goods, with the park and certain others, are given unto Mr. Wryothessley'.¹⁸ This was not in fact the case; Wriothesley had to pay the enormous sum of £1350. 6s. 8d. for the estate.¹⁹ A servant of Wriothesley, John

¹⁵ H. A. Doubleday, (ed.), *A History of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, in *Victoria History of the Counties of England*, II, (Westminster, 1903), p. 139.

¹⁶ On 31 July 1545 Wriothesley entertained the council and the king at his home at Titchfield.

¹⁷ *LP*, xii, (1), 539 (45); xii, (2), 1150 (7); xii, (2), 1311 (40); xiii, (1), 1519 (67).

¹⁸ *Lisle Letters*, v. 97.

¹⁹ *Lisle Letters*, iii. 401/2.

Crayford, however was a great deal less enthusiastic about Beaulieu where almost all the inhabitants were 'sanctuary men'. He said that the murderers and felons, 'hopeless men', would have to go at once, but the remainder were debtors and of good behaviour and could stay. He added that Wriothesley, though 'unseen and unknown' was highly regarded by reputation.²⁰

In mid January 1538 Wriothesley was admitted, without paying any fine, a free burgess of the town of Southampton 'by common consent of the mayor, bailiffs and burgesses', and granted the nomination and gift of the chantry of St. Mary's and the Holy Rood church.²¹ By then of course he was one of the most important men in Cromwell's entourage and the officials in the largest town near his home would have been anxious to retain his goodwill.

Somewhat earlier Wriothesley had been awarded the custody of the possessions of Arthur Russhe during the wardship of his son Anthony, together with the manors of Forward in Devon and Fowey in Cornwall, land in the Isle of Wight and other areas of Hampshire with an annual income of £34. 19. 9. Within six months he had obtained a licence to sell the Devon land.²²

A short lease of the site of Hyde Abbey at Winchester which had surrendered in April 1539, rather later than most, was granted to Wriothesley and the building pulled down and sold with 'amazing expedition'.²³ Wriothesley also reported to Cromwell from Winchester in September 1538 in his capacity as a 'visitor' to advise him that

²⁰ *LP*, xiii, (1), 796. Thomas Stepyns, former abbot of Beaulieu (Bewley) also pleaded for the 'poor men privileged in the Sactuary of Bewley for debt'. They had been very honest while they were under the abbots supervision. *LP*, xiii, (1), 792 and PRO, SP. 7/1, no. 59. *Wriothesley Deeds*.

²¹ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 58. In A. L. Merson, *The Third Book of Remembrance of Southampton, 1514-1602* (Southampton, 1952), i, p. 61, the date of the grant is given as 4 January 1538. The original grant is now in Palace House at Beaulieu, the home of the present Lord Montagu.

²² *LP*, xiii, (2), 190 (17).

²³ *LP*, xiv, (1), 827, 862.

they 'intend both at Hyde and St. Mary's to sweep away all the rotten bones that be called relics... lest it be thought we came more for the treasure than for the avoiding of the abomination of idolatry'.²⁴ That self-justification may have impressed Cromwell but it did show that Wriothesley was wise to suspicions about motives, as Wriothesley's record of laying hands on everything that he could, shows clearly enough. In February 1540 he was granted a 21 year lease at 30s a year, of fishery rights near Christchurch again in Hampshire, part of the possessions of the attainted and executed countess of Salisbury.²⁵

In June 1540 Wriothesley received a significant mark of the king's favour and confidence by his appointment to the commission of the peace for Hampshire, an office reserved for those of influence and status within their own county, men who had the support of the local gentry, could enforce the law and call men to arms in the king's service if need required it.²⁶

In July 1540 Wriothesley was granted the 'great mansion' within the close of Austin Friars, in London, which had formerly belonged to the attainted Thomas Cromwell.²⁷ A very valuable office was also awarded to Wriothesley in August 1540 when he was authorised to take and receive recognisances within the verge of the king's household and allowed to pocket the fees for doing so.²⁸ The last benefit received by Wriothesley before 1542 was the grant in fee of the rents of Bitlesden (Biddlesden) monastery in Buckingham in October 1540, which the next month he sold

²⁴ *LP*, xiii, (2), 401.

²⁵ *LP*, xv, 282 (100).

²⁶ *Ibid*, 831 (47).

²⁷ *Ibid*, 942 (113).

²⁸ *Ibid*, 1027 (7).

on to his brother in law Edmund Peckham, the king's cofferer later appointed as one of Wriothesley's executors.²⁹

An important symbol of his advancing status and continuing favour of the king was the licence granted in August 1542 to Wriothesley to retain over and above his personal household servants, forty persons in his livery. The following month he was again appointed to the commission for the peace in Hampshire alongside important figures in the country such as Cranmer, and Lord Chancellor Audley.³⁰ Those two events are probably linked. In October Wriothesley was awarded the custody of the manor of Fryfolke in Hampshire, with the rights of wardship and custody over the three young daughters of Richard Andrews during their minority. This was one of several wardship grants made to him in the early 1540s. In January 1541 he was appointed to the very important office of constable of Southampton Castle at an annual fee of £10 and in November 1542, of Porchester Castle following the death of the then earl of Southampton, William Fitzwilliam in October. In addition to all this he was in February 1541 made steward of Ringwood and Christchurch at an annual fee of £10. Both of those towns were within fifty miles of his home at Titchfield, and part of the vast estates of the former countess of Salisbury. Also in the grant of November 1542 he received a lease for 21 years of her manor of Warlington, and chief stewardship of lands formerly owned by her and located in Somerset, Devon, Dorset, Wiltshire, Oxford, Buckingham, Berks, Hertford, Bedford, Suffolk and his own county of Hampshire.³¹ Wriothesley benefited greatly from the stewardship of her lands and the 'mastership of the hunt of deer in all these'.³² From the Dean and Chapter of

²⁹ *LP*, xvi, 222.

³⁰ *LP*, xvii, 714 (24), 881 (14).

³¹ *Ibid*, 1154 (6).

³² *LP*, xvi, 503 (12); xvi, 580 (95); xvii, 1154 (6,7).

Winchester he secured a lease of Barton Farm in 1542 and of Titchfield rectory in 1545, while bishop Gardiner granted him a 99 year lease of Fareham Park in December 1543 at a small rent of under £5 a year.³³

A useful and influential office came Wriothesley's way with his appointment as one of the chamberlains of the receipt of the exchequer in January 1543, following the death of Robert Radcliffe, earl of Sussex.³⁴ A further small office was acquired in March 1543 with his appointment as the prime or high steward of all the manors of the College of Blessed Mary of Winchester, with an annual fee of £5.³⁵ Wriothesley's position as Henry's secretary gave him unrivalled opportunities to advance his financial and property interests, and the accumulation of offices small and great added much prestige to the Wriothesley family name and the king's favour was further demonstrated with the licence in May 1545, to increase his retained men from forty to one hundred persons, at the same time as he was elected to the Order of the Garter. For the war against France in 1544 Thomas was directed to furnish for service in the field, 'twenty demilances, twenty javelins with targets, fifty footmen archers, forty pikes, twenty demihakes, and fifty bills', a total of two hundred fully armed and equipped men.³⁶

In January 1544 there was the grant expressed to be by way of reward, of the rectory of Beaulieu and numerous other parcels of land at Southwick, Christchurch, Netley and Hyde.³⁷ At the end of the following March within twelve days of its surrender, Wriothesley acquired the site of the late chapel of St. Elizabeth 'in the

³³ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 128, vol. 5, p. 516.

³⁴ LP, xviii, (1), 100, g 35. Elizabeth Wriothesley later married Thomas Radcliffe, Lord Fitzwalter.

³⁵ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 59.

³⁶ LP, xvii, 714 (24); xix, (1), 273; xx, (1), 846 (91).

³⁷ LP, xix, (1), 80 (24). The Austin priory of Southwick had an annual value of £315, and was transferred to Wriothesley in April 1538. Netley Abbey close by the Solent was one of the largest monastic establishments in Hampshire.

meadows of St. Stephen before the gate of the bishop of Winchester's palace of Wolvesey'. It was only in the middle of the month that the provost of the college had surrendered to Henry the 'whole college and its site....and all goods, jewels, and other things whatsoever to the said college belonging to hold for ever'.³⁸ The Commissioners who sold the land to him for £500 were instructed 'not to vex the said Wriothesley if the premises be found hereafter to be of greater value', which suggests that Henry was well aware that the asking price was below the market value.³⁹

Despite any sensitivity that might have arisen by the acquisition of property almost on the door step of his cathedral, Stephen Gardiner granted to Wriothesley in April 1543, the mastership of the game and beasts within his lordships, manors, and warrens of Fareham, Havant and Alverstoke, 'for the great love and singular affection that he bears towards Sir Thomas', and the bishop further granted to him and Jane his wife the right with as many servants or other persons as they pleased to harry, hunt or chase.⁴⁰ On 14 May 1543, the bailiffs of Andover, with the assent of the whole corporation, granted to Secretary Wriothesley the office of high steward of their town for life.⁴¹ Another substantial grant came in May 1544 by way of an annuity of £300 from the Annunciation of St. Mary which was payable 'as long as he remains Lord Chancellor', an office to which Wriothesley had just been appointed.⁴² The same month it was directed that he was to receive as long as he was the Keeper of the Great Seal, all the fees granted to Audley, which amounted to the substantial sum of £542

³⁸ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 149.

³⁹ *LP*, xix, (1), 278 (74). The property is also described as Wolvesey College by Scarisbrick in 'Henry VIII and the dissolution of the secular colleges' in *Law and Government under the Tudors*, eds. C. Cross, D. M. Loades and J. J. Scarisbrick (Cambridge, 1988), p. 61.

⁴⁰ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 132.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, vol. 3, 158.

⁴² *LP*, xix, (1), 610 (31). HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 3, p. 242.

together with an additional £200 for attending Star Chamber and the value of 12 tuns of wine a year.⁴³

Another example of the king's generosity to his chancellor is recorded in September 1545 when by letters patent, 'in consideration of the good counsel and service' of Thomas Wriothesley, lands formerly belonging to the dissolved monastery of Hyde were granted to him 'to hold of the king's gift without any account to be rendered therefor'.⁴⁴ Somewhat similar words were used in a bargain and sale by Henry to Wriothesley expressed to be 'in consideration... of his faithful service and counsel', of the manor of Northestonham, which was yet another property which had formerly been in the ownership of the monastery of Hyde.⁴⁵ It is unclear however why Henry should have lent the manor house of Hackney to Wriothesley for his London home sometime after 1540; he had purchased it from the earl of Northumberland about 1536 and presumably he had sold or given it to Henry. The property passed in July 1547 into the hands of William Herbert who quickly sold it on.⁴⁶

Apart from the financial benefits generated by these grants, there was the more intangible but none the less very important elevation 'to the degree of a baron to hold to himself and the heirs male of his body forever without fine or fee' on 1 January 1544.⁴⁷ The dignity may well have also been an expression of gratitude for his successful efforts in conjunction with Gardiner and Thirlby in negotiating a treaty with the emperor Charles to invade France by June 1544.⁴⁸ In April 1545 Wriothesley was appointed to the highest rank of chivalry, the most noble Order of the Garter and was

⁴³ *LP*, xix, (1), 610 (41).

⁴⁴ *HRO, Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 3, p. 230.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 292.

⁴⁶ *LP*, xix, (1), 368, *ibid*, xx, (1), 557, *ibid*, xx, (2), 268, 280.

⁴⁷ *HRO, Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 3, p. 233.

⁴⁸ *LP*, xix, (1), 1, 80 (1).

duly installed on 17 May 1545. His style was proclaimed at the banquet as the 'noble chevalier Thomas Seigneur Wrythesley et Seigneur de Tichefelde'.⁴⁹ Many members of the nobility despite their rank, were never so honoured despite regular canvassing on their behalf.

Wriothesley took the so-called 'golden prebends' of Charminster and Bere (Beer), from the bishop of Salisbury in 1545,⁵⁰ and his good friend, Robert Southwell, master of the rolls, granted to the Lord Chancellor the office of master of the game for life with the right to hunt within his park at Berwick in Essex.⁵¹ It is also recorded that in 1546 a very large number of properties, including the 'golden prebends', together with the priories of Southwick, St. Katherine's, Bremmer, and the monastery at Abendon, were granted to him; the last of them he sold on within a few days to Edmund Peckham, by this time his brother-in-law.⁵² About the same time Wriothesley succeeded to the office of chief steward north of the Trent, after Cromwell, Audley and Suffolk had successively held the post.⁵³ In August he disposed of a property at Painshill (Paynyshyll) in Hampshire to Richard Lister, who (by the time that Wriothesley executed his will in 1550), was married to his daughter Elizabeth.⁵⁴

Wriothesley's elevation to the earldom of Southampton two weeks into Edward's reign in accordance with the provisions of Henry's will helped to keep him on board in the new situation which had developed with the 'adjustment' of its provisions for the future government of the kingdom. With the grant of the earldom, Wriothesley received lands to the annual value of £300. The passing of Henry brought

⁴⁹ Ibid, 1, 80(1).

⁵⁰ LP, xvii, 283 (26); xviii, (I), 66 (47); xx, (2), 707 (8). See F. Heal, *Of Prelates and Princes: A study of the Economic and Social position of the Tudor Episcopate* (Cambridge, 1980).

⁵¹ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 121.

⁵² LP, xxi, (1), 1166 (29), 1166 (73). See p. 15 below.

⁵³ LP, xxi, (2), 775.

⁵⁴ LP, xxi, (1), 1537 (35).

an end to any grants and benefits for Wriothesley apart from the money bequest in the king's will.

Land transactions feature frequently in the state papers, and in May 1546, it is recorded that Wriothesley had negotiated the purchase from Hertford of several properties in Hampshire, and land at Hampstead Heath. Nearly seven years earlier, in November 1539, Hertford had granted to Wriothesley a licence to hunt and chase his deer at Elvetham Park in consideration of 'the manifold kindness shown to him by his very good friend'.⁵⁵

Wriothesley frequently applied for and obtained licences to dispose of lands, to authorise friends and servants to hunt deer and gamebirds with crossbows or handguns on his estates in Hampshire.⁵⁶ In what was becoming by the mid 1530s his main area of landed property, he received a grant of £20 from the customs of the port of Southampton upon his creation as earl in February 1547, and at the end of the same year he was permitted to alienate manors to Robert Southwell, master of the rolls, and early in 1548 he was licensed to grant lands to six separate persons some of whom resided at Wenbury in Devon. He was allowed to dispose of another estate at Woodham Water in Essex to Henry earl of Sussex in June 1548 although Wriothesley himself had only acquired it in the previous February. He sold to Lord St. John in September 1546 land which Henry had granted to him in 1537 together with some property which he had earlier purchased from the earl of Hertford. Three months after he sold to Thomas Knight the house and site of Beaulieu, the monastery, manor and township,⁵⁷ but it appears that he reserved out of that grant, an annuity for life for the

⁵⁵ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 3, p. 241.

⁵⁶ *Calendar of Patent Rolls of Edward VI.* p. 189.

⁵⁷ LP, xxi, (2), 200 (34), 648 (32).

sum of £60.⁵⁸ There must have been some additional provisions as the Beaulieu estate remained in the family and is still held by Wriothesley's descendants.

There is the clearest evidence that Wriothesley was constantly buying and selling land, consolidating his possessions and creating an affinity in the county.⁵⁹

Haseley and Combley were sold to John Mill of Southampton in 1538, and some lands of St. Elizabeth's college at Sutton Scotney and Norton St. Valery were conveyed to John Twyne and his sons William and Nicholas in 1544. A few years after Wriothesley sold land to William Paulet, later marquess of Winchester, and in the same year settled the manor of Clere Woodcott on William Stone one of his servants, on his marriage.

The same day as he executed his will, Wriothesley demised to his servant Thomas Raynes some land, meadows and pastures in the parish of St. Pancras and Hampstead Heath for twenty years at an annual rent of £10.⁶⁰ Thomas Wriothesley died only seven days after completing his testamentary arrangements and his will was proved in May 1551 by Wriothesley's widow and Edmund Peckham. The value of the estate given as £1300. Thomas Wriothesley's splendid monument still exists in Titchfield Church incorporating one which commemorates his son Henry and his wife Jane who lived until September 1574, finding some occupation in bringing up not only her son Henry but her grandson the third earl and patron of Shakespeare in later life. It is a commentary upon the brevity of human recollection that the monument records the death of Thomas Wriothesley as having been in 1551.

⁵⁸ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 147.

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 98, 131, 189, 334, 335

⁶⁰ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 3, p. 173.

Appendix 2

Place House, Titchfield

Place House, as Wriothesley's home at Titchfield in Hampshire was known is described first in John Leland's *Itinerary*, as a 'right stately home embatelid, and having a goodely gate, and a Conducte castelid in the Midle of the Court of it, yn the very same Place wher the late Monasterie of *Premonstratenses* stood called *Tichefelde*'.¹ It appears that the work of demolition and rebuilding carried out was started by Wriothesley without the king's licence as we find that retrospectively he was permitted in February 1542 'to build walls and towers around and within the abbey of Titchfield' and was also given a pardon for having transformed the abbey into a 'messuage of the manor and decorated it with towers and battlements'.² There are no indications that John Leland paid a call at Wriothesley's Place House, but by then Wriothesley had moved into a wholly different sphere, well above that of his former school companion, an antiquary of modest means. Leland had taken holy orders and acted as tutor to a younger son of Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk. He received a small annual pension from the king³ and ultimately became his librarian and later his antiquary. His championed the cause of the new religious establishment, but was distressed by the dissolution of the monasteries mainly because of the irreparable loss of books and manuscripts which suffered damage or were destroyed in the activities of the commissioners.⁴

¹ J. Leland, *Itinerary in England and Wales*, 5 vols. ed. L. T. Smith (Southern Illinois U. P., 1964), vol. 1, p. 281.

² *LP*, xvii, 137 (54).

³ *LP*, v, 305.

⁴ *DNB*, xi, 892.

The monastery at Titchfield which had been founded in 1231 by Peter bishop of Winchester, with the assistance of a group of canons from Halesowen abbey was suppressed on 18 December 1537, and on 30 December was granted to Thomas Wriothesley in a state 'most naked and barren'. As we have already noted, Wriothesley carried out a great deal of work which involved much demolition, reconstruction and redesigning. The king's commissioners Crayford and Lathom wrote to him with their suggestions for what he needed to do, indicating where demolition was necessary and what could still be used of the existing buildings. The extent of the demolition and the rebuilding operation is described fully by W. H. St. John Hope.⁵

In subsequent correspondence the name Anthony Roke appears and he ultimately became Wriothesley's agent, and clearly had a hand in supervising the design and construction of the new home for his patron, though Wriothesley had quite clear ideas of his own as to what alterations and new building was needed. The Chronicle of King Edward VI records that he visited Titchfield from 10 to 14 August 1552 no doubt as a guest of the countess.⁶

Today there is still something to be seen of both the Tudor work and the former monastery, but much of Wriothesley's creation was pulled down in 1781 by the then owners of the property.

⁵ W. H. St. John Hope, 'The Making of Place House at Titchfield near Southampton, in 1538', *AJ*, 1905, pp. 231-43. See also p. 10 below.

⁶ W. K. Jordan (ed.), *The Chronicle and Political Papers of King Edward VI* (London, 1966) p. 139.

Appendix 3

Thomas Wriothesley's Will

Thomas Wriothesley's will had detailed provisions for the disposition of his estate and demonstrates the trouble he took to dispose of his substantial land holdings, and to provide for his closest relatives. It is also shown in the specific bequests in subsequent codicils to acknowledge friends and servants. The will was made on 21 July 1550 and the two codicils on 23 and 24 July. They are expressed in terms which suggest a commitment to the Catholic rather than to any reformed view, and the choice of executors supports this. They were the widow Jane, Edmund Peckham, Henry's cofferer, Thomas Pope and a few others. There are other indications to the same effect.

Wriothesley's first bequests were to the late king's children, Edward, Mary and Elizabeth, a gracious and (cynically ?) thoughtful gesture. Next he gave to his wife 'Ladye Jane', all the household belongings, to the value of four hundred marks, her own clothing and his ready money and followed that by marriage portions for three of his five daughters. They were as follows: Mary, who was married twice, secondly to Richard Lyster,¹ Elizabeth, who was married to Thomas Radcliffe, lord Fitzwalter, later third earl of Sussex,² and died in 1555, and Anne who was betrothed to a 'Mr. Wallop'. It is not wholly certain who this might be, but it is likely that it was Sir John Wallop who died later in 1551, although he would have been probably near fifty-five years old at the time and had already been twice married, leaving no issue.³ Wallop

¹ The marriage settlement of Mary Wriothesley and Richard Lyster is extant in the HRO, no. 932.

² The marriage settlement between Lord Wriothesley and the earl of Sussex, father of the bridegroom is recorded in HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 3, p. 281. In November 1551, Lord Fitzwalter mortgaged some land at Portsea and Stubbington to the executors of the earl of Southampton.

³ *DNB*, xx, 609.

died before the marriage could take place and the marriage settlement deed was accordingly cancelled.⁴ To his daughter Mabel 'for whome I haue yet entryd with no man into covenante', and who ultimately married Walter Sandys, grandson of William Baron Sandys, Wriothesley left a substantial sum.⁵ The remaining daughter Catherine was married to Thomas Cornwallis, groom-porter to queen Elizabeth, though this may have been her second marriage as the Wriothesley Papers record that a marriage settlement was entered into in November 1545, for the wedding of Catherine to Matthew Arundell son of Sir Thomas Arundell, a staunch Catholic.⁶ This seems all the more probable as Wriothesley demised to Thomas Arundell in February 1548, land of the late monastery of Shaston 'and of the whole town and borough of Shaston with all messuages etc. thereto belonging in the parishes of St. Peter, St. Laurence, St. James, St. Martin and Holy Trinity'.⁷ In the same month Wriothesley purchased the manor of Broughton in Southampton, formerly owned by the Hospital of St. Nicholas at Portsmouth, from William Garrard, alderman of London, for the substantial sum of £800.

All of the bequests in the will were subject to a condition that the daughters respectively attained the age of eighteen years, in default of which their shares were to be divided equally between Wriothesley's widow and Thomas' only surviving son and heir Henry. There had been two other boys born of the marriage with Jane, one William who died in August 1537,⁸ and another, Anthony, who died about 1542. The

⁴ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, no. 935. (The original deed is extant).

⁵ William Lord Sandys had formerly been fighting for Henry in France and took part in the battles there of 1523.

⁶ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, no. 933. (The original deed is extant). This was not the Cornish branch of the family involved in the 1549 rebellion.

⁷ HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 3, p. 295.

⁸ *LP*, xii, (2), 546. John Hutton, a servant of Wriothesley wrote him sympathising with his loss on 20 August 1537. Two months later he wrote to his master that 'he had two pots of silver made for Mrs. Wriothesley'. *Ibid*, p. 825.

bulk of the estate and the property were to be held by the executors, to be administered by them until the heir Henry, attained the age of twenty-one years, with provision made in the event that he would not attain that age or died leaving no issue surviving him.⁹

The choice of Edmund Peckham as executor is significant. He was the king's cofferer from 1524, and the treasurer and master of the mint from 1546, a post he held until his death in 1564.¹⁰ Thomas Wriothesley who was his junior in age by ten years had been a 'servant' to him as we have seen, but in time had overtaken and passed him both in wealth and status. The selection of Peckham may well have been a reflection of Wriothesley's religious inclinations as Peckham was a committed Catholic who supported Mary against the claim of the lady Jane Grey to the throne in 1553. Another strong link between Wriothesley and Peckham was the fact that they both married daughters of John Cheyne of Chesham Bois; Edmund Peckham was married to Anne and Wriothesley to Jane Cheyne. As brothers-in-law there was a community of interest extended to many aspects of their lives, and the bequest of two hundred marks 'to Anne my wyfe's sister' was a substantial one which marked affection and regard as well as kinship.

Also in the will there were numerous bequests of money to other relatives, to servants, the steward and controller, and 'to the poore people of Tichefield, Farham, and other places where my lands lygh... the somme of two hundreth poundes'. The will is sufficiently widely drawn to take account of the possibility that lady Jane might be pregnant at the time of Wriothesley's death, and makes appropriate provision for

⁹ Probate of the will of Thomas Wriothesley proved on 14 May 1551, HRO, *Wriothesley Deeds*, vol. 3, p. 231

¹⁰ *DNB*, xv, 634.

the child, male or female, should one be born. There were gifts to those whose position in the state were significant; to the countesses of Arundel and Warwick, the earl of Sussex, and William Herbert, (later to be the earl of Pembroke), Richard Southwell, John Wallop and Thomas Pope. At the end of the will there are bequests of a gilt cup of the value of £20 to the earls of Warwick and Arundel. Somewhat surprisingly, but expressed to be on account of the great generosity that he had received at the hands of the late king, (which was correct), Wriothesley provided that during the minority of his son Henry, the king, Edward should enjoy the fruits of a large number of manors he owned in Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Middlesex. Nor at the end did he fail to remember his 'cossen' Charles Wriothesley, the chronicler.

The value of the deceased's estate as agreed with William Herbert was stated at £1300 and that sum was clearly far below the true value of the estate as any examination of the Wriothesley documents in the HRO will demonstrate. A much more realistic assessment of the gross income of the estate was between £2000 and £3000.¹¹

¹¹ L. Stone, *Family and Fortune: Studies in Aristocratic Finance in the 16th and 17th centuries* (Oxford, 1973), p. 211.

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This thesis is prepared in accordance with the guidelines specified by the University of Warwick, 'Guide to Examinations for Higher Degrees by Research', September 1996.